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THE WRONG TWIN

BOOKS BY
HARRY LEON WILSON

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LIONS OF THE LORD
MA PETTENGILL
RUGGLES OF RED GAP
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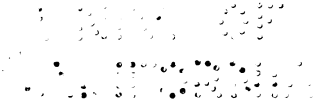

"THE GIRL NOW GLOWERED AT EACH OF THEM IN TURN. 'I DON'T CARE!' SHE MUTTERED. 'I WILL, TOO, RUN AWAY!'"

THE WRONG TWIN

BY

HARRY LEON WILSON

ILLUSTRATED

BY

FREDERIC R. GRUGER

GARDEN CITY, N. Y., AND TORONTO
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY
1922

TO VIRGINIA

Gift of Class of 1900

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TO
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THE WRONG TWIN

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THE WRONG TWIN

CHAPTER I

AN ESTABLISHMENT in Newbern Center, trading under the name of the Foto Art Shop, once displayed in its window a likeness of the twin sons of Dave Cowan. Side by side, on a lavishly fringed plush couch, they confronted the camera with differing aspects. One sat forward with a decently, even blandly, composed visage, nor had he meddled with his curls. His mate sat back, scowling, and fought the camera to the bitter end. His curls, at the last moment, had been mussed by a raging hand.

This was in the days of an earlier Newbern, when the twins were four and Winona Penniman began to be their troubled mentor—troubled lest they should not grow up to be refined persons; a day when Dave Cowan, the widely travelled printer, could rightly deride its citizenry as small-towners; a day when the Whipples were Newbern's sole noblesse and the Cowan twins not yet torn asunder.

The little town lay along a small but potent river that turned a few factory wheels with its eager current, and it drew sustenance from the hill farms that encircled it for miles about. You had to take a dingy way train up to the main line if you were going the long day's journey to New York, so that the Center of the name was often construed facetiously by outlanders.

Now Newbern Center is modern, and grows callous. Only the other day a wandering biplane circled the second nine of its new golf course, and of the four players on the tenth green but one paid it the tribute of an upward glance. Even this

was a glance of resentment, for his partner at that instant eyed the alignment for a three-foot putt and might be distracted. The annoyed player flung up a hostile arm at the thing and waved it from the course. Seemingly abashed, the machine slunk off into a cloud bank.

Old Sharon Whipple, the player who putted, never knew that above him had gone a thing he had very lately said could never be. Sharon has grown modern with the town. Not so many years ago he scoffed at rumours of a telephone. He called it a contraption, and said it would be against the laws of God and common sense. Later he proscribed the horseless carriage as an impracticable toy. Of flying he had affirmed that the fools who tried it would deservedly break their necks, and he had gustily raged at the waste of a hundred and seventy-five acres of good pasture land when golf was talked.

Yet this very afternoon the inconsequent dotard had employed a telephone to summon his car to transport him to the links, and had denied even a glance of acknowledgment at the wonder floating above him. Much like that is growing Newbern. There was gasping aplenty when Winona Penniman abandoned the higher life and bought a flagrant pair of satin dancing slippers, but now the town lets far more sensational doings go almost unremarked.

The place tosses even with the modern fever of unrest. It has its bourgeoisie, its proletariat, its radicals, but also a city-beautiful association and a rather captious sanitary league. Lately a visiting radical, on the occasion of a certain patriotic celebration, expressed a conventional wish to spit upon the abundantly displayed flag. A knowing friend was quick to dissuade him.

"Don't do it! Don't try it! Here, now, you got no freedom! Should you spit only on their sidewalk, they fine the heart's blood out of you."

Midway between these periods of very early and very late Newbern there was once a shining summer morning on which the Cowan twins, being then nine years old, set out from the

Penniman home to pick wild blackberries along certain wooded lanes that environed the town. They were barefooted, wearing knee pants buttoned to calico waists, these being patterned with small horseshoes which the twins had been told by their father would bring them good luck. They wore cloth caps, and carried tin pails for their berries. These would be sold to the Pennimans at an agreed price of five cents a quart, and it was Winona's hope that the money thus earned on a beautiful Saturday morning would on Sunday be given to the visiting missionary lately returned from China. Winona had her doubts, however, chiefly of Wilbur Cowan's keenness for proselyting, on his own income, in foreign lands. Too often with money in hand, he had yielded to the grosser tyranny of the senses.

The twins ran races in the soft dust of the highway until they reached the first outlying berry patch. Here they became absorbed in their work. They were finding well-laden bushes along the fence of what to-day is known as the old graveyard.

Newbern now has a sophisticated new cemetery, with carved marble and tall shafts of polished granite, trimmed shrubs, and garnished mounds, contrasting—as the newer town to the old—with the dingy inclosure where had very simply been inhumed the dead of that simpler day. In the new cemetery blackberry bushes would not be permitted. Along the older plot they flourished. The place itself is overgrown with rank grasses, with ivy run wild, with untended shrubs, often hiding the memorials, which are mostly of brown sandstone or gray slate. It lies in deep shadow under cypress and willow. It is very still under the gloom of its careless growths—a place not reassuring to the imaginative.

The bottoms of the tin pails had been covered with berries found outside the board fence, and now a hunt for other laden bushes led the twins to a trove of ripened fruit partly outside and partly inside that plot where those of old Newbern had been chested and laid unto their fathers. There was, of course, no question as to the ownership of that fruit out here. It was any one's. There followed debate on a

possible right to that which grew abundantly beyond the fence. By some strange but not unprecedented twisting of the mature mind of authority, might it not belong to those inside, or to those who had put them there? Further, would Mrs. Penniman care to make pies of blackberries—even the largest and ripest yet found—that had grown in a graveyard?

"They taste just the same," announced the Wilbur twin, having, after a cautious survey, furtively reached through two boards of the fence to retrieve a choice cluster.

"I guess nobody would want 'em that owns 'em," conceded Wilbur.

"Well, you climb over first."

"We better both go together at the same time."

"No, one of us better try it first and see; then, if it's all right, I'll climb over, too."

"Aw, I know a better patch up over West Hill in the Whipple woods."

"What you afraid of? Nobody would care about a few old blackberries."

"I ain't afraid."

"You act like it, I must say. If you wasn't afraid you'd climb that fence pretty quick, wouldn't you? Looky, the big ones!"

The Wilbur twin reflected on this. It sounded plausible. If he wasn't afraid, of course he would climb that fence pretty quick. It stood to reason. It did not occur to him that any one else was afraid. He decided that neither was he.

"Well, I'm afraid of things that ain't true that scare you in the dark," he admitted, "but I ain't afraid like that now. Not one bit!"

"Well, I dare you to go."

"Well, of course I'll go. I was just resting a minute. I got to rest a little, haven't I?"

"Well, I guess you're rested. I guess you can climb a plain and simple fence, can't you? You can rest over there, can't you—just as well as what you can rest here?"

The resting one looked up and down the lane, then peered

forward into the shadowy tangle of green things with its rows of headstones. Then, inhaling deeply, he clambered to the top of the fence and leaped to the ground beyond.

"Gee, gosh!" he cried, for he had landed on a trailing branch of blackberry vine.

He sat down and extracted a thorn from the leathery sole of his bare foot. The prick of the thorn had cleaned his mind of any merely fanciful fears. A surpassing lot of berries was there for the bold to take. His brother stared not too boldly through the fence at the pioneer.

"Go on and try picking some," he urged in the subdued tones of extreme caution.

The other calmly set to work. The watcher awaited some mysterious punishment for this desecration. Presently, nothing having happened, he glowed with a boldness of his own and mounted to the top of the fence, where he again waited. He whistled, affecting to be at ease, but with a foot on the safe side of the fence. The busy worker inside paid him no attention. Presently Merle yawned.

"Well, I guess I'll come in there myself and pick a few berries," he said very loudly.

He was giving fair notice to any malign power that might be waiting to blast him. After a fitting interval, he joined his brother and fell to work.

"Well, I must say!" he chattered. "Who's afraid to come into a graveyard when they can get berries like this? We can fill the pails, and that's thirty cents right here."

The fruit fell swiftly. The Wilbur twin worked in silence. But Merle appeared rather to like the sound of a human voice. He was aimlessly loquacious. His nerves were not entirely tranquil.

"They're growing right over this old one," announced Wilbur presently. Merle glanced up to see him despoiling a bush that embowered one of the brown headstones and an all but obliterated mound.

"You better be careful," he warned.

"I guess I'm careful enough for this old one," retorted

the bolder twin, and swept the trailing bush aside to scan the stone. It was weather-worn and lichened, but the carving was still legible.

"It says, 'Here lies Jonas Whipple, aged eighty-seven,' and it says, 'he passed to his reward April 23, 1828,' and here's his picture."

He pointed to the rounded top of the stone where was graven a circle inclosing primitive eyes, a nose, and mouth. From the bottom of the circle on either side protruded wings.

Merle drew near to scan the device. He was able to divine that the intention of the artist had not been one of portraiture.

"That ain't either his picture," he said, heatedly. "That's a cupid!"

"Ho, gee, gosh! Ain't cupids got legs? Where's its legs?"

"Then it's an angel."

"Angels are longer. I know now—it's a goop. And here's some more reading."

He ran his fingers along the worn lettering, then brought his eyes close and read—glibly in the beginning:

Behold this place as you pass by.
As you are now, so once was I.
As I am now, so you must be.
Prepare for death, and follow me.

The reader's voice lost in fullness and certainty as he neared the end of this strophe.

"Say, we better get right out of here," said Merle, stepping toward the fence. Even Wilbur was daunted by the blunt warning from beyond.

"Here's another," called Merle, pausing on his way toward the fence. In hushed, fearful tones he declaimed:

Dear companion in your bloom,
Behold me moldering in the tomb,
For
Death is a debt to Nature due,
Which I have paid, and so must you.

"There, now, I must say!" called Merle. "We better hurry out!"

But the Wilbur twin lingered. Ripe berries still glistened about the stone of the departed Jonas Whipple.

"Aw, gee, gosh, they're just old ones!" he declared. "It says this one passed to his reward in 1828, and we wasn't born then, so he couldn't be meaning us, could he? We ain't passed to our reward yet, have we? I simply ain't going to pay the least attention to it."

A bit nervously he fell again to picking the berries. The mere feel of them emboldened him.

"Gee, gosh! We ain't followed him yet, have we?"

"'As I am now, so you must be!'" quoted the other in warning.

"Well, my sakes, don't everyone in town know that? But it don't mean we're going to be—be it—right off."

"You better come just the samey!"

But the worker was stubborn.

"Ho, I guess I ain't afraid of any old Whipple as old as what this one is!"

"Well, anyway," called Merle, still in hushed tones, "I guess I got enough berries from this place."

"Aw, come on!" urged the worker.

In a rush of bravado he now extemporized a chant of defiance:

Old Jonas Whipple
Was an old cripple!
Old Jonas Whipple
Was an old cripple!

The Merle twin found this beyond endurance. He leaped for the fence and gained its top, looking back with a blanched face to see the offender smitten. He wanted to go at once, but this might be worth waiting for.

Wilbur continued to pick berries. Again he chanted loudly, mocking the solemnities of eternity:

Old Jonas Whipple
Was an old cripple!
Was an old—— .

The mockery died in his throat, and he froze to a statue of fear. Beyond the headstone of Jonas Whipple, and toward the centre of the plot, a clump of syringa was plainly observed to sway with the movements of a being unseen.

"I told you!" came the hoarse whisper of Merle, but he, too, was chained by fright to the fence top.

They waited, breathless, in the presence of the king of terrors. Again the bush swayed with a sinister motion. A deeper hush fell about them; the breeze died and song birds stilled their notes. A calamity was imminent. Neither watcher now doubted that a mocked Jonas Whipple would terribly issue from the tangle of shrubbery.

The bushes were again agitated; then at the breaking point of fear for the Cowan twins the emergent figure proved to be not Jonas but a trifling and immature female descendant of his, who now sped rapidly toward them across the intervening glade, nor were the low mounds sacred to her in her progress. Her short shirt of a plaid gingham flopped above her thin, bony legs as she ran, and she grasped a wide-brimmed straw hat in one hand.

It should be said that this girl appalled the twins hardly less than would an avenging apparition of the outraged Jonas Whipple. Beings of a baser extraction, they had looked upon Whipples only from afar and with awe. Upon this particular Whipple they had looked with especial awe. Other known members of the tribe were inhumanly old and gray and withered, not creatures with whom the most daring fancy could picture the Cowan twins sustaining any sane human relationship. But this one was young and moderately

understandable. Observed from across the room of the Methodist Sunday-school, she was undoubtedly human like them; but always so befurbished with rare and shining garments, with glistening silks and costly velvets and laces, with bonnets of pink rosebuds and gloves of kid, that the thought of any secular relationship had been proposterous. Yet she was young, an animal of their own age, whose ways could be comprehended.

She halted her mad flight when she discovered them, then turned to survey the way she had come. She was panting. The twins regarded her stonily, shaping defenses if she brought up anything regarding any one who might have mocked Jonas Whipple.

When again she could breathe evenly, she said: "It was Cousin Juliana driving by was why I dashed in here. I think I have foiled her."

She was not now the creature of troubled elegance that Sabbaths had revealed her. The gingham dress was such as a daughter of the people might have worn, and the straw hat, though beribboned, was not impressive. She was a bony little girl, with quick, greenish eyes and a meagre pigtail of hair of the hue that will often cause a girl to be called Carrots. Her thin, eager face was lavishly freckled; her nose was trivial to the last extreme. Besides her hat, she carried and now nonchalantly drew refreshment from a stick of spirally striped candy inserted for half its length through the end of a lemon. The candy was evidently of a porous texture, so that the juice of the fruit would reach the consumer's pursed lips charmingly modified by its passage along the length of the sweet. One needed but to approximate a vacuum at the upper end of the candy, and the mighty and mysterious laws of atmospheric pressure completed the benign process.

It should be said for the twins that they were not social climbers. In their instant infatuation for this novel device they quite lost the thrill that should have been theirs from the higher aspects of the encounter. They were not im-

pressed at meeting a Whipple on terms of seeming equality. They had eyes and desire solely for this delectable refection. Again and again the owner enveloped the top of the candy with prehensile lips; deep cavities appeared in her profusely spangled cheeks. Her eyes would close in an ecstasy of concentration. The twins stared, and at intervals were constrained to swallow.

"Gee, gosh!" muttered the Wilbur twin, helpless in the sight of so fierce a joy. His brother descended briskly from the fence.

"I bet that's good," he said, genially, and taking the half-filled pail from his brother's unresisting grasp he approached the newcomer. "Try some of these nice ripe blackberries," he royally urged.

"Thanks a lot!" said the girl, and did so. But the hospitality remained one-sided.

"I have to keep up my strength," she explained. "I have a long, hard journey before me. I'm running away."

Blackberry juice now stained her chin, enriching a colour scheme already made notable by dye from the candy.

"Running away!" echoed the twins. This, also, was sane.

"Where to?" demanded Wilbur.

"Far, far off to the great city with all its pitfalls."

"New York?" demanded Merle. "What's a pitfall?"

"The way Ben Blunt did when his cruel stepmother beat him because he wouldn't steal and bring it home."

"Ben Blunt?" questioned both twins.

"That's whom I am going to be. That's whom I am now—or just as soon as I change clothes with some unfortunate. It's in a book. 'Ben Blunt, the Newsboy; or, From Rags to Riches.' He run off because his cruel stepmother beat him black and blue, and he become a mere street urchin, though his father, Mr. Blunt, was a gentleman in good circumstances; and while he was a mere street urchin he sold papers and blacked boots, and he was an honest, manly lad and become adopted by a kind, rich old gentleman named Mr. Pettigrew, that he saved from a gang of rowdies that boded him no good,

and was taken to his palatial mansion and given a kind home and a new suit of clothes and a good Christian education, and that's how he got from rags to riches. And I'm going to be it; I'm going to be a mere street urchin and do everything he did."

"Ho!" The Wilbur twin was brutal. "You're nothing but a girl!"

The runaway flashed him a hostile glance.

"Don't be silly! What difference does it make? Haven't I a cruel stepmother that is constantly making scenes if I do the least little thing, especially since Miss Murtree went home because her mother has typhoid in Buffalo. You wait till I get the right clothes."

"Does she beat you something awful?" demanded the Merle twin unctuously.

The victim hesitated.

"Well, you might call it that."

"What kind of right clothes?" asked his brother.

"Boy's clothes; filthy rags of boy's clothes—like yours," she concluded. Her appraising glance rested on the garments of the questioning twin. Both became conscious of their mean attire, and squirmed uneasily.

"These are just everyday clothes," muttered the Wilbur twin.

"We have fine new Sunday suits at home," boasted Merle. "Too fine to wear every day. If you saw those clothes once I guess you'd talk different. Shoes and stockings, too."

The girl effaced his grandeur with a shrug.

"That's nothing—everyone has mere Sunday clothes."

"Is Miss Murtree that old lady that brings you to the Sunday-school?" demanded Wilbur.

"Yes; she's my governess, and had to go to her dying mother, and I hope she gets a cruel stepmother that will be harsh to her childish sports, like that Mrs. Blunt was. But she isn't old. It's her beard makes her look so mature."

"Aw!" cried both twins, denoting incredulity.

"She has, too, a beard! A little moustache and some

growing on her chin. When I first got 'Ben Blunt, or from Rags to Riches,' out of the Sunday-school library I asked her how she made it grow, because I wanted one to grow on me, but she made a scene and never did tell me. I wish it would come out on me that way." She ran questing fingers along her brief upper lip and round her pointed chin. "But prob'ly I ain't old enough."

"You're only a girl," declared the Wilbur twin, "and you won't ever have a beard, and you couldn't be Ben Blunt."

"Only a girl!" she flashed, momentarily stung into a defense of her sex. "Huh! I guess I'd rather be a girl than a nasty little boy with his hands simply covered with warts."

The shamed hands of Wilbur Cowan sought the depths of his pockets, but he came up from the blow.

"Yes, you'd rather be a girl!" he retorted, with ponderous irony. "It's a good thing you wasn't born in China. Do you know what? If you'd been born in China, when they seen what it was they'd simply have chucked you into the river to drown'd."

"The idea! They would not!"

"Ho! You're so smart! I guess you think you know more than that missionary that told us so at the meeting. I guess you think he was telling lies. They'd have drownded you as soon as they seen it was a girl. But boys they keep."

"I don't listen to gossip," said the girl, loftily.

"And besides," continued the inquisitor, "if you think boys are such bad ones, what you trying to be one for, and be Ben Blunt and all like that?"

"You're too young to understand if I told you," she replied with a snappish dignity.

The Merle twin was regretting these asperities. His eyes clung constantly to the lemon and candy.

"She can be Ben Blunt if she wants to," he now declared in a voice of authority. "I bet she'll have a better moustache than that old Miss Murphy's."

"Murtree," she corrected him, and spoke her thanks with

a brightening glance. "Here," she added, proffering her treasure, "take a good long suck if you want to."

He did want to. His brother beheld him with anguished eyes. As Merle demonstrated the problem in hydraulics the girl studied him more attentively, then gleamed with a sudden new radiance.

"Oh, I'll tell you what let's do!" she exclaimed. "We'll change clothes with each other, and then I'll be Ben Blunt without waiting till I get to the great city. Cousin Juliana could pass me right by on the street and never know me." She clapped her small brown hands. "Goody!" she finished.

But the twins stiffened. The problem was not so simple.

"How do you mean—change clothes?" demanded Merle.

"Why, just change! I'll put on your clothes and look like a mere street urchin right away."

"But what am I going to——"

"Put on my clothes, of course. I explained that."

"Be dressed like a girl?"

"Only till you get home; then you can put on your Sunday clothes."

"But they wouldn't be Sunday clothes if I had to wear 'em every day, and then I wouldn't have any Sunday clothes."

"Stupid! You can buy new ones, can't you?"

"Well, I don't know."

"I'd give you a lot of money to buy some."

"Let's see it."

Surprisingly the girl stuck out a foot. Her ankle seemed badly swollen; she seemed even to reveal incipient elephantiasis.

"Money!" she announced. "Busted my bank and took it all. And I put it in my stocking the way Miss Murtree did when she went to Buffalo to visit her dying mother. But hers was bills, and mine is nickels and dimes and quarters and all like that—thousands of dollars' worth of 'em, and they're kind of disagreeable. They make me limp—kind of. I'll give you a lot of it to buy some new clothes. Let's change

quick." She turned and backed up to the Merle twin. "Unbutton my waist," she commanded.

The Merle twin backed swiftly away. This was too summary a treatment of a situation that still needed thought.

"Let's see your money," he demanded.

"Very well!" She sat on the grassy low mound above her forebear, released the top of the long black stocking from the bite of a hidden garter and lowered it to the bulky burden. "Give me your cap," she said, and into Merle's cap spurted a torrent of coins. When this had become reduced to a trickle, and then to odd pieces that had worked down about the heel, the cap held a splendid treasure. Both twins bent excitedly above it. Never had either beheld so vast a sum. It was beyond comprehension. The Wilbur twin plunged a hand thrillingly into the heap.

"Gee, gosh!" he murmured from the sheer loveliness of it. Shining silver—thousands of dollars of it, the owner had declared.

"Now I guess you'll change," said the girl, observing the sensation she had made.

The twins regarded each other eloquently. It seemed to be acknowledged between them that anything namable would be done to obtain a share of this hoard. Still it was a monstrous infamy, this thing she wanted. Merle filtered coins through his fingers for the wondrous feel of them.

"Well, mebbe we better," he said at last.

"How much do we get?" demanded Wilbur, exalted but still sane.

"Oh, a lot!" said the girl, carelessly. Plainly she was not one to haggle. "Here, I'll give you two double handfuls—see, like that," and she measured the price into the other cap, not skimping. They were generous, heaping handfuls, and they reduced her horde by half. "Now!" she urged. "And hurry! I must be far by nightfall. I'll keep my shoes and stockings and not go barefoot till I reach the great city. But I'll take your clothes and your cap. Unbutton my waist."

Again she backed up to Merle. He turned to Wilbur.

"I guess we better change with her for all that money. Get your pants and waist off and I'll help button this thing on you."

It was characteristic of their relations that there was no thought of Merle being the victim of this barter. The Wilbur twin did not suggest it, but he protested miserably.

"I don't want to wear a girl's clothes."

"Silly!" said the girl. "It's for your own good."

"You only put it on for a minute, and sneak home quick," reminded his brother, "and look at all the money we'll have! Here, show him again all that money we'll have!"

And the girl did even so, holding up to him riches beyond the dreams of avarice. There was bitterness in the eyes of the Wilbur twin even as they gloated on the bribe. The ordeal would be fearful. He was to become a thing—not a girl and still not a boy—a thing somehow shameful. At last the alternative came to him.

"You change with her," he said, brightening. "My pants got a tear here on the side, and my waist ain't so clean as yours."

"Now don't begin that!" said his brother, firmly. "We don't want a lot of silly arguments about it, do we? Look at all the money we'll have!"

"Your clothes are the best," said the girl. "I must be filthy and ragged. Oh, please hurry!" Then to Merle: "Do unbutton my waist. Start it at the top and I can finish."

Gingerly he undid the earliest buttons on that narrow back of checked gingham, and swiftly the girl completed the process to her waist. Then the waist was off her meagre shoulders and she stepped from the hated garment. The Wilbur twin was aghast at her downright methods. He had a feeling that she should have retired for this change. How was he to know that an emergency had lifted her above prejudices sacred to the meaner souled? But now he raised a new objection, for beneath her gown the girl had been still abundantly and intricately clad, girded, harnessed.

"I can't ever put on all those other things," he declared, indicating the elaborate underdressing.

"Very well, I'll keep 'em on under the pants and waist till I get to the great city," said the girl, obligingly. "But why don't you hurry?"

She tossed him the discarded dress. He was seized with fresh panic as he took the thing.

"I don't like to," he said, sullenly.

"Look at all the money we'll have!" urged the brother.

"Here," said the girl, beguilingly, "when you've done it I'll give you two long sucks of my lemon candy."

She took the enticing combination from Merle and held it fair before his yearning eyes; the last rite of a monstrous seduction was achieved. The victim wavered and was lost. He took the dress.

"Whistle if any one comes," he said, and withdrew behind the headstone of the late Jonas Whipple. He—of the modest sex—would not disrobe in public. At least it was part modesty; in part the circumstance that his visible garments were precisely all he wore. He would not reveal to this child of wealth that the Cowans had not the habit of multifarious underwear. Over the headstone presently came the knee pants, the faded calico waist with bone buttons. The avid buyer seized and apparelled herself in them with a deft facility. The Merle twin was amazed that she should so soon look so much like a boy. From behind the headstone came the now ambiguous and epicene figure of the Wilbur twin, contorted to hold together the back of his waist.

"I can't button it," he said in deepest gloom.

"Here!" said the girl.

"Not you!"

It seemed to him that this would somehow further degrade him. At least another male should fasten this infamous thing about him. When the buttoning was done he demanded the promised candy and lemon. He glutted himself with the stimulant. He had sold his soul and was taking the price. His wrists projected far from the gingham sleeves, and in

truth he looked little enough like a girl. The girl looked much more like a boy. The further price of his shame was paid in full.

"I'd better take charge of it," said Merle, and did so with an air of large benevolence. "I just don't know what all we'll spend it for," he added.

The Wilbur twin's look of anguish deepened.

"I got a pocket in this dress to hold my money," he suggested.

"You might lose it," objected Merle. "I better keep it for us."

The girl had transferred her remaining money to the pockets which, as a boy, she now possessed. Then she tried on the cap. But it proved to be the cap of Merle.

"No; you must take Wilbur's cap," he said, "because you got his clothes."

"And he can wear my hat," said the girl.

The Wilbur twin viciously affirmed that he would wear no girl's hat, yet was presently persuaded that he would, at least when he sneaked home. It was agreed by all finally that this would render him fairly a girl in the eyes of the world. But he would not yet wear it. He was beginning to hate this girl. He shot hostile glances at her as—with his cap on her head, her hands deep in the money-laden pockets—she swaggered and swanked before them.

"I'm Ben Blunt—I'm Ben Blunt," she muttered, hoarsely, and swung her shoulders and brandished her thin legs to prove it.

He laughed with scorn.

"Yes, you are!" he gibed. "Look at your hair! I guess Ben Blunt didn't have long girl's hair, did he—stringy old red hair?"

Her hands flew to her pigtail.

"My hair is not red," she told him. "It's just a decided blonde." Then she faltered, knowing full well that Ben Blunt's hair was not worn in a braid. "Of course I'm going to cut it off," she said. "Haven't you boys got a knife?"

They had a knife. It was Wilbur's, but Merle quite naturally took it from him and assumed charge of the ensuing operation. Wilbur Cowan had to stand by with no place to put his hands—a mere onlooker. Yet it was his practical mind that devised the method at last adopted, for the early efforts of his brother to sever the braid evoked squeals of pain from the patient. At Wilbur's suggestion she was backed up to the fence and the braid brought against a board, where it could be severed strand by strand. It was not neatly done, but it seemed to suffice. When the cap was once more adjusted, rather far back on the shorn head, even the cynical Wilbur had to concede that the effect was not bad. The severed braid, a bow of yellow ribbon at the end, now engaged the notice of its late owner.

"The officers of the law might trace me by it," she said, "so we must foil them."

"Tie a stone to it and sink it in the river," urged Wilbur.

"Hide it in those bushes," suggested Merle.

But the girl was inspired by her surroundings.

"Bury it!" she ordered.

The simple interment was performed. With the knife a shallow grave was opened close to the stone whereon old Jonas Whipple taunted the living that they were but mortal, and in it they laid the pigtail to its last rest, patting the earth above it and replacing the turf against possible ghouls.

Again the girl swaggered broadly before them, swinging her shoulders, flaunting her emancipated legs in a stride she considered masculine. Then she halted, hands in pockets, rocked easily upon heel and toe, and spat expertly between her teeth. For the first time she impressed the Wilbur twin, extorting his reluctant admiration. He had never been able to spit between his teeth. Still, there must be things she couldn't do.

"You got to smoke and chew and curse," he warned her.

"I won't, either! It says Ben Blunt was a sturdy lad of good habits. Besides, I could smoke if I wanted to. I already have. I smoked Harvey D.'s pipe."

"Who's Harvey D.?"

"My father. I smoked his pipe repeatedly."

"Repeatedly?"

"Well, I smoked it twice. That's repeatedly, ain't it? I'd have done it more repeatedly, but Miss Murtree sneaked in and made a scene."

"Did you swallow the smoke through your nose?"

"I—I guess so. It tasted way down on my insides."

Plainly there was something to the girl after all. The Wilbur twin here extracted from the dress pocket, to which he had transferred his few belongings, the half of something known to Newbern as a pennygrab. It was a slender roll of quite inferior dark tobacco, and the original purchaser had probably discarded it gladly. The present owner displayed it to the girl.

"I'll give you a part of this, and we'll light up."

"Well, I don't know. It says Ben Blunt was a sturdy lad of good——"

"I bet you never did smoke repeatedly!"

Her manhood was challenged.

"I'll show you!" she retorted, grim about the lips.

With his knife he cut the evil thing in fair halves. The girl received her portion with calmness, if not with gratitude, and lighted it from the match he gallantly held for her. And so they smoked. The Merle twin never smoked for two famous Puritan reasons—it was wrong for boys to smoke and it made him sick. He eyed the present saturnalia with strong disapproval. The admiration of the Wilbur twin—now forgetting his ignominy—was frankly worded. Plainly she was no common girl.

"I bet you'll be all right in the big city," he said.

"Of course I will," said the girl.

She spat between her teeth with a fine artistry. In truth she was spitting rather often, and had more than once seemed to strangle, but she held her weed jauntily between the first and second fingers and contrived an air of relish for it.

"Anyway," she went on, "it'll be better than here where

I suffered so terribly with everybody making the vilest scenes about any little thing that happened. After they find it's too late they'll begin to wish they'd acted kinder. But I won't ever come back, not if they beg me to with tears streaming down their faces, after the vile way they acted; saying maybe I could have a baby brother after Harvey D. got that stepmother, but nothing was ever done about it, and just because I tried to hide Mrs. Wadley's baby that comes to wash, and then because I tried to get that gypsy woman's baby, because everyone knows they're always stealing other people's babies, and she made a vile scene, too, and everyone tortured me beyond endurance."

This was interesting. It left the twins wishing to ask questions.

"Did that stepmother beat you good?" again demanded Merle.

"Well, not the way Ben Blunt's stepmother did, but she wanted to know what I meant by it and all like that. Of course she's cruel. Don't you know that all stepmothers are cruel? Did you ever read a story about one that wasn't vile and cruel and often tried to leave the helpless children in the woods to be devoured by wolves? I should say not!"

"Where did you hide that Wadley baby?"

"Up in the storeroom in a nice big trunk, where I fixed a bed and everything for it, while its mother was working down in the laundry, and I thought they'd look a while and give it up, but this Mrs. Wadley is kind of simple-minded or something. She took on so I had to say maybe somebody had put it in this trunk where it could have a nice time. And this stepmother taking on almost as bad."

"Did you nearly get a gypsy woman's baby?"

"Nearly. They're camped in the woods up back of our place, and I went round to see their wagons, and the man had some fighting roosters that would fight anybody else's roosters, and they had horses to race, and the gypsy woman would tell the future lives of anybody and what was going to

happen to them, and so I saw this lovely, lovely baby asleep on a blanket under some bushes, and probably they had stole it from some good family, so while they was busy I picked it up and run."

"Did they chase you?"

Wilbur Cowan was by now almost abject in his admiration of this fearless spirit.

"Not at first; but when I got up to our fence I heard some of 'em yelling like very fiends, and they came after me through the woods, but I got inside our yard, and the baby woke up and yelled like a very fiend, and Nathan Marwick came running out of our barn and says: 'What in time is all this?' And someone told folks in the house and out comes Harvey D.'s stepmother that he got married to, and Grandpa Gideon and Cousin Juliana that happened to be there, and all the gypsies rushed up the hill and everyone made the vilest scene and I had to give back this lovely baby to the gypsy woman that claimed it. You'd think it was the only baby in the wide world, the way she made a scene, and not a single one would listen to reason when I tried to explain. They acted simply crazy, that's all."

"Gee, gosh!" muttered the Wilbur twin. This was indeed a splendid and desperate character, and he paid her the tribute of honest envy. He wished he might have a cruel stepmother of his own, and so perhaps be raised to this eminence of infamy. "I bet they did something with you!" he said.

The girl waved it aside with a gesture of repugnance, as if some things were too loathsome for telling. He perceived that she had, like so many raconteurs, allowed her cigar to go out.

"Here's a match," he said, and courteously cupped his hands about its flame. The pennygrab seemed to have become incombustible, and the match died futilely. "That's my last match," he said.

"Maybe I better keep this till I get to the great city."

But he would not have it so.

"You can light it from mine," and he brought the ends of the two pennygrabs together.

"First thing you know you'll be dizzy," warned the moralist, Merle.

"Ho, I will not!"

She laughed in scorn, and valiantly puffed on the noisome thing. Thus stood Ben Blunt and the Wilbur twin, their faces together about this business of lighting up; and thus stood the absorbed Merle, the moral perfectionist, earnestly hoping his words of warning would presently become justified. It did not seem right to him that others should smoke when it made him sick.

At last smoke issued from the contorted face of Ben Blunt, and some of this being swallowed, strangulation ensued. When the paroxysm of coughing was past the hero revealed running eyes, but the tears were of triumph, as was the stoic smile that accompanied them.

And then, while the reformer Merle awaited the calamity he had predicted, while Wilbur surrendered anew to infatuation for this intrepid soul that would dare any crime, while Ben Blunt rocked on spread feet, the glowing pennygrab cocked at a rakish angle, while, in short, vice was crowned and virtue abased, there rang upon the still air the other name of Ben Blunt in cold and fateful emphasis. The group stiffened with terror. Again the name sounded along those quiet aisles of the happy dead. The voice was one of authority—cool, relentless, awful.

"Patricia Whipple!" said the voice.

The twins knew it for the voice of Miss Juliana Whipple, who had remotely been a figure of terror to them even when voiceless. Juliana was thirty, tall, straight, with capable shoulders, above which rose her capable face on a straight neck. She wore a gray skirt and a waist of white, with a severely starched collar about her throat, and a black bow tie. Her straw hat was narrow of brim, banded with a black ribbon. Her steely eyes flashed from beneath the hat. Once before the twins had encountered her and her voice, and the

results were blasting, though the occasion was happier. Indeed, the intention of Juliana had been wholly amiable, for it was at the picnic of the Methodist Sunday-school.

She came upon the twins in a fair dell, where they watched other children at a game, and she took very civil notice of them, saying, "How do you do, young gentlemen?" in deep, thrilling tones, and though they had been doing very well until that moment, neither of the twins had recovered strength to say so. To them she had been more formidable than a schoolteacher. Their throats had closed upon all utterance. Now as she faced them, a dozen feet away, even though the words "Patricia Whipple" applied to but one of their number, the twins took the challenge to themselves and quailed. They knew that deep and terrible voice menaced themselves as well as the late Ben Blunt—for that mere street urchin, blown upon by the winds of desolation, had shrivelled and passed. In his place drooped a girl in absurd boy's clothes, her hair messily cut off, smoking something she plainly did not wish to smoke. The stricken lily of vice drooped upon its stem.

One by one the three heads turned to regard the orator. How had she contrived that noiseless approach? How had she found them at all in this seclusion? The heads having turned to regard her, turned back and bowed in stony glares at the rich Whipple-nourished turf. They felt her come toward them; her shadow from the high sun blended with theirs. And again the voice, that fearsome organ on which she managed such dread effects:

"Patricia Whipple, what does this mean?"

She confronted them, a spare, grim figure, tall, authoritative, seeming to be old as Time itself. How were they to know that Juliana was still youthful, even attired youthfully, though by no means frivolously, or that her heart was gentle? She might, indeed, have danced to them as Columbine, and her voice would still have struck them with terror. She brought her deepest tones to those simple words, "What does this mean?" All at once it seemed to them that something

had been meant, something absurd, monstrous, lawless, deserving a ghastly punishment.

The late Ben Blunt squirmed and bored a heel desperately into the turf above a Whipple whose troubles had ceased in 1828. She made a rough noise in her throat, but it was not informing. The Wilbur twin, forgetting his own plight, glanced warm encouragement to her.

"I guess she's got a right to run away," he declared, brazenly.

But in this burst of bravado he had taken too little account of his attire. He recalled it now, for the frosty gray eyes of Juliana ran about him and came to rest upon his own eyes. For the taut moment that he braved her glance it unaccountably seemed to him that the forbidding mouth of the woman twitched nervously into the beginning of a smile. It was a fleeting effect, but it did seem as if she had almost laughed, then caught herself. And there was a tremolo defect in the organ tone with which she now again demanded in blistering politeness, "May I ask what this means?"

The quick-thinking Merle twin had by now devised an exit from any complicity in whatever was meant. He saw his way out. He spoke up brightly and with no shadow of guilt upon his fair young face.

"I told her it was wrong for the young to smoke; it stunts their growth and leads to evil companions. But she wouldn't listen to me."

There was a nice regret in his tone.

Miss Juliana ignored him.

"Patricia!" she said, terribly.

But the late Ben Blunt, after the first devastating shock, had been recovering vitality for this ordeal.

"I don't care!" she announced. "I'll run away if I want to!" And again, bitterly, "I don't care!"

"Run away!"

Juliana fairly bayed the words. She made running away seem to be something nice people never, never did.

"I don't care!" repeated the fugitive, dully.

There was a finality about it that gave Juliana pause. She had expected a crumpling, but the offender did not crumple. It seemed another tack must be taken.

"Indeed?" she inquired, almost cooingly. "And may I ask if this absurd young creature was to accompany you on your—your travels?" She indicated the gowned Wilbur, who would then have gone joyously to his reward, even as had Jonas Whipple. His look of dumb suffering would have stayed a judge less conscientious. "I presume this is some young lady of your acquaintance—one of your little girl friends," she continued, though it was plain to all that she presumed nothing of the sort.

"He is not!" The look of dumb suffering had stoutened one heart to new courage. "He's a very nice little boy, and he gave me these ragged clothes to run away in, and now he'll have to wear his Sunday clothes. And you know he's a boy as well as I do!"

"She made him take a lot of money for it," broke in the Merle twin. "I was afraid she wasn't doing right, but she wouldn't listen to me, so she gave him the money and I took charge of it for him."

He beamed virtuously at Miss Juliana, who now rewarded him with a hurried glance of approval. It seemed to Miss Juliana and to him that he had been on the side of law and order, condemning and seeking to dissuade the offenders from their vicious proceedings. He felt that he was a very good little boy, indeed, and that the tall lady was understanding it. He had been an innocent bystander.

Miss Juliana again eyed the skirted Wilbur, and the viewless wind of a smile's beginning blew across the lower half of her accusing face. Then she favoured the mere street urchin with a glance of extreme repugnance.

"I shall have to ask all of you to come with me," she said, terribly.

"Where to?" demanded the chief culprit.

"You know well enough."

This was all too true.

"Me?" demanded the upright Merle, as if there must have been some mistake. Surely no right-thinking person could implicate him in this rowdy affair!

"You, if you please," said Miss Juliana, but she smiled beautifully upon him. He felt himself definitely aligned with the forces of justice. He all at once wanted to go. He would go as an assistant prosecuting attorney.

"Not—not me?" stammered the stricken Wilbur.

"By all means—you!" Miss Juliana sharpened her tone: She added, mysteriously: "It would be good without you—good, but not perfect."

"Now I guess you'll learn how to behave yourself in future!" admonished Merle, the preacher, and edged toward Miss Juliana as one withdrawing from contamination.

"Oh, not me!" pleaded the voice of Wilbur.

"I think you heard me," said Miss Juliana. "Come!"

She uttered "come" so that not mountains would have dared stay, much less a frightened little boy in a girl's dress. In his proper garb there had been instant and contemptuous flight. But the dress debased all his manly instincts. He came crawling, as the worm. The recent Ben Blunt pulled a cap over a shorn head and advanced stoically before the group.

"One moment," said Miss Juliana. "We seem to be forgetting something." She indicated the hat of Patricia Whipple lying on the ground near where smouldered the two ends of the abandoned pennygrab. "I think you might resume this, my dear, and restore the cap to its rightful owner." It was but a further play of her debased fancy. The mere street urchin was now decked in a girl's hat and a presumable girl wore an incongruous cap. "I will ask you two rare specimens to precede me," she said when the change was made. They preceded her.

"I don't care!" This was more bravado from the urchin.

"Well, don't you care!" Juliana said it, soothingly.

"I will, too, care!" retorted the urchin, betraying her sex.

"Will she take us to the jail?" whispered the trembling Wilbur.

"Worse!" said the girl. "She'll take us home!"

Side by side they threaded an aisle between rows of the carefree dead, whom no malignant Miss Juliana could torture. Behind them marched their captor, Merle stepping blithely beside her.

"It's lovely weather for this time of year," they heard him say.

CHAPTER II

THEY came all too soon to a gate giving upon the public road and the world of the living who make remarks about strange sights they witness. Still it was a quiet street, and they were accorded no immediate reception. There stood the pony cart of Miss Juliana, and this, she made known, they were to enter. It was a lovely vehicle, drawn by a lovely fat pony, and the Wilbur twin had often envied those privileged to ride in it. Never had he dreamed so rich a treat could be his. Now it was to be his, but the thing was no longer a lovely pony cart; it was a tumbril—worse than a tumbril, for he was going to a fate worse than death.

The shameful skirt flopped about his bare legs as he awkwardly clambered into the rear seat beside the sex-muddled creature in a boy's suit and a girl's hat. Miss Juliana and the godly Merle in the front seat had very definitely drawn aloof from the outcasts. They chatted on matters at large in the most polite and social manner. They quite appeared to have forgotten that their equipage might attract the notice of the vulgar. When from time to time it actually did this the girl held her head brazenly erect and shot back stare for stare, but the Wilbur twin bowed low and suffered.

Sometimes it would merely be astounded adults who paused to regard them, to point canes or fingers at them. But again it would be the young who had never been disciplined to restrain their emotions in public. Some of these ran for a time beside the cart, with glad cries, their clear, ringing voices raised in comments of a professedly humorous character. Under Juliana's direction the cart did not progress too rapidly At one crossing she actually stopped the thing until Ellis Bristow, who was blind, had with his know-

ing cane tapped a safe way across the street. The Wilbur twin at this moment frankly rejoiced in the infirmity of poor Ellis Bristow. It was sweet relief not to have him stop and stare and point. If given the power at this juncture he would have summarily blinded all the eyes of Newbern Center.

Up shaded streets they progressed, leaving a wake of purest joy astern. But at last they began the ascent of West Hill, that led to the Whipple New Place, leaving behind those streets that came alive at their approach. For the remainder of their dread progress they would elicit only the startled regard of an occasional adult farmer.

"What'll she do to us?" The Wilbur twin mumbled this under cover of sprightly talk from the front seat. His brother at the moment was boasting of his scholastic attainments. He had, it appeared, come on amazingly in long division.

"She won't do a thing!" replied his companion in shame. "Don't you be afraid!"

"I am afraid. But I wouldn't be afraid if I had my pants on again," explained the Wilbur twin, going accurately to the soul of his panic.

"I'll do it next time," said the girl. "I'll hurry. I won't stop at any old graveyard."

"Graveyard!" uttered the other, feelingly. "I should say not!" Never again was he to think of such places with any real pleasure.

"All she wants," explained the girl—"she wants to talk up in her nose like she was giving a lecture. She loves to. She'll make a vile scene."

Now they were through an imposing gate of masonry, and the pony languidly drew them along a wide driveway toward the Whipple mansion, an experience which neither of the twins had ever hoped to brave; but only one of them was deriving any pleasure from the social elevation. The Merle twin looked blandly over the wide expanse of lawn and flower beds and tenderly nursed shrubs, and then at the pile of red

brick with its many windows under gay-striped awnings, and its surmounting white cupola, which he had often admired from afar. He glowed with rectitude. True, he suffered a brother lost to all sense of decent human values, but this could not dim the lustre of his own virtue or his pleasant suspicion that it was somehow going to be suitably rewarded. Was he not being driven by a grand-mannered lady up a beautiful roadway past millions of flowers and toward a wonderful house? It paid to be good.

The Wilbur twin had ceased to regard his surroundings. He gazed stolidly before him, nor made the least note of what his eyes rested upon. He was there, helpless. They had him!

The cart drew up beside steps leading to a wide porch shaded by a striped awning.

"Home at last," cooed Miss Juliana with false welcome.

A loutish person promptly abandoned a lawn mower in the near distance and came to stand by the head of the languid pony. He grinned horribly, and winked as the two figures descended from the rear of the cart. For a moment, halting on the first of the steps, the Wilbur twin became aware that just beyond him, almost to be grasped, was a veritable rainbow curved above a whirling lawn sprinkler. And he had learned that a rainbow is a thing of gracious promise. But probably they have to be natural rainbows; probably you don't get anything out of one you make yourself. Even as he looked, the shining omen vanished, somewhere shut off by an unseen power.

"This way, please," called Miss Juliana, cordially, and he followed her guiltily up the steps to the shaded porch.

The girl had preceded her. The Merle twin lingered back of them, shocked, austere, deprecating, and yet somehow bland withal, as if these little affairs were not without their compensating features.

The bowed Wilbur twin was startled by a gusty torrent of laughter. With torturing effort, he raised his eyes to a couple of elderly male Whipples. One sat erect on a cushioned

bench, and one had lain at ease in a long, low thing of wicker. It was this one who made the ill-timed and tasteless demonstration that was still continuing. Ultimately the creature lost all tone from his laughter. It went on, soundless but uncannily poignant. Such was the effect that the Wilbur twin wondered if his own ears had been suddenly deafened. This Whipple continued to shake silently. The other, who had not laughed, whose face seemed ill-modelled for laughing, nevertheless turned sparkling eyes from under shelving brows upon Juliana and said in words stressed with emotion: "My dear, you have brightened my whole day."

The first Whipple, now recovered from his unseemly paroxysm, sat erect to study the newcomers in detail. He was a short, round-chested man with a round moon face marked by heavy brows like those of the other. He had fat wrists and stout, blunt fingers. With a stubby thumb he now pushed up the outer ends of the heavy brows as if to heighten the power of his vision for this cherished spectacle.

"I seem to recognize the lad," he murmured as if in privacy to his own hairy ears. "Surely I've seen the rascal about the place, perhaps helping Nathan at the stable; but that lovely little girl—I've not had the pleasure of meeting her before. Come, sissy"—he held out blandishing arms—"come here, Totte, and give the old man a kiss."

Could hate destroy, these had been the dying words of Sharon Whipple. But the Wilbur twin could manage only a sidelong glare insufficient to slay. His brother giggled until he saw that he made merry alone.

"What? Bless my soul, the minx is sulky!" roared the wit.

The other Whipple intervened.

"What was our pride and our joy bent upon this time?" he suavely demanded. "I take it you've thwarted her in some new plot against the public tranquillity."

"The young person you indicate," said Juliana, "was about to leave her home forever—going out to live her own life away from these distasteful surroundings."

"So soon? We should be proud of her! At that tender age, going out to make a name for herself!"

"I gather from this very intelligent young gentleman here that she had made the name for herself before even starting."

"It was Ben Blunt," remarked the young gentleman, helpfully.

"Hey!" Sharon Whipple affected dismay. "Then what about this young girl at his side? Don't tell me she was luring him from his home here?"

"It will surprise you to know," said Juliana in her best style, "that this young girl before you is not a girl."

Both Whipples ably professed amazement.

"Not a girl?" repeated the suave Whipple incredulously. "You do amaze me, Juliana! Not a girl, with those flower-like features, those starry eyes, that feminine allure? Preposterous! And yet, if he is not a girl he is, I take it, a boy."

"A boy who incited the light of our house to wayward courses by changing clothes with her."

The harsher Whipple spoke here in a new tone.

"Then she browbeat him into it. Scissors and white aprons—yes, I know her!"

"He didn't seem browbeaten. They were smoking quite companionably when I chanced upon them."

"Smoking! Our angel child smoking!"

This from Sharon Whipple in tones that every child present knew as a mere pretense of horror. Juliana shrugged cynically.

"They always go to the bad after they leave their nice homes," she said.

"Children should never smoke till they are twenty-one, and then they get a gold watch for it," interjected the orator, Merle. He had felt that he was not being made enough of. "It's bad for their growing systems," he added.

"And this?" asked Gideon Whipple, indicating the moralist.

"The brother of that"—Juliana pointed. "He did his best in the way of advice, I gather, but neither of the pair

would listen to him. He seems to be safely conservative, but not to have much influence over his fellows."

"Willing to talk about it, though," said Sharon Whipple, pointedly.

The girl now glowered at each of them in turn.

"I don't care!" she muttered. "I will, too, run away! You see!"

"It's what they call a fixed idea," explained Juliana. "She doesn't care and she will, too, run away. But where is Mrs. Harvey?"

"Poor soul!" murmured Sharon. "Think what a lot she's missed already! Do call her, my dear!"

Juliana stepped to the doorway and called musically into the dusky hall: "Mrs. Harvey! Mrs. Harvey! Come quickly, please! We have something lovely to show you!"

The offenders were still to be butchered to make a Whipple holiday.

"Coming!" called a high voice from far within.

The Wilbur twin sickeningly guessed this would be the cruel stepmother. Real cruelty would now begin. Beating, most likely. But when, a moment later, she stood puzzling in the doorway, he felt an instant relief. She did not look cruel. She was not even bearded. She was a plump, meekly prettyish woman with a quick, flustered manner and a soft voice. She brought something the culprits had not found in their other judges.

"Why, you poor, dear, motherless thing!" she cried when she had assured herself of the girl's identity, and with this she enfolded her. "I'd like to know what they've been doing to my pet!" she declared, aggressively.

"The pet did it all to herself," explained Gideon Whipple.

"I will, too, run away!" affirmed the girl, though some deeper conviction had faded from the threat.

"Still talking huge high," said Sharon. "But at your age, my young friend, running away is overchancy." Mrs. Harvey Whipple ignored this.

"Of course you will—run away all you like," she soothed.

"It's good for people to run away." Then she turned amazingly to the Wilbur twin and spoke him fair as a fellow human. "And who is this dear little boy? I just know he was kind enough to change clothes with you so you could run away better! And here you're keeping him in that dress when you ought to know it makes him uncomfortable—doesn't it, little boy?"

The little boy movingly ogled her with a sidelong glance of gratitude for what at the moment seemed to be the first kind words he had ever heard.

"You have her give me back my pants!" said he. Then for the first time he faced his inquisitors eye to eye. "I want my own pants!" he declared, stoutly. Man spoke to man there, and both the male Whipples stirred guiltily; feeling base, perhaps, that mere sex loyalty had not earlier restrained them.

"Indeed, you blessed thing, you shall have them this moment!" said the cruel stepmother. "You two march along with me."

"And not keep them till Harvey D. comes home?" It was the implacable Juliana.

"Well"—Mrs. Harvey considered—"I'm sure he would adore to see the little imps, but really they can't stand it any longer, can you, dears? It would be bad for their nerves. We'll have to be satisfied with telling him. Come along quickly!"

"I will, too, run away!"

The girl flung it over her shoulder as she swaggered into the hall. The Wilbur twin trod incessantly on her heels.

"Wants his pants!" murmured Sharon Whipple. "Prunes and apricots! Wants his pants!"

"Mistake ever to part with 'em," observed Gideon. "Of course she browbeat him."

"My young friend here tells me she bribed him," explained Juliana.

"She gave him a lot of money and I'm keeping it for him," said her self-possessed young friend, and he indicated bulging pockets.

"Looted her bank," said Juliana.

"Forehanded little tike," said Sharon, admiringly. "And smart! She can outsmart us all any day in the week!"

In a dim upper bedroom in the big house Wilbur Cowan divested himself of woman's raiment for probably the last time in his life. He hurried more than he might have, because the room was full of large, strange, terrifying furniture. It was a place to get out of as soon as he could. Two buttons at the back of the dress he was unable to reach, but this trifling circumstance did not for more than a scant second delay his release. Then his own clothes were thrust in to him by the stepmother, who embarrassingly lingered to help him button his own waist with the faded horseshoes to the happily restored pants.

"There, there!" she soothed when he was again clad as a man child, and amazingly she kissed him.

Still tingling from this novel assault, he was led by the woman along a dim corridor to a rear stairway. Down this they went, along another corridor to a far door. She brought him to rest in a small, meagrely furnished but delightfully scented room. It was scented with a general aroma of cooked food, and there were many shelves behind glass doors on which dishes were piled. A drawer was opened, and almost instantly in his ready hands was the largest segment of yellow cake he had ever beheld. He had not dreamed that pieces of cake for human consumption could be cut so large. And it was lavishly gemmed with fat raisins. He held it doubtfully.

"Let's look again," said the preposterous woman. She looked again, pushing by a loose-swinging door to do it, and returned with a vast area of apple pie, its outer curve a full ninety degrees of the circle. "Now eat!" said the woman.

She was, indeed, a remarkable woman. She had not first asked him if he were hungry.

"I'm much obliged for my pants and this cake and pie,"

said the boy, so the woman said, "Yes, yes," and hugged him briefly as he ate.

Not until he had consumed the last morsel of these provisions and eke a bumper of milk did the woman lead him back to that shaded porch where he had lately been put to the torture. But now he was another being, clad not only as became a man among men but inwardly fortified by food. If stepmothers were like this he wished his own father would find one. The girl with her talk about cruelty—he still admired her, but she must be an awful liar. He faced the tormenting group on the porch with almost faultless self-possession. He knew they could not hurt him.

"Well, well, well!" roared Sharon Whipple, meaning again to be humorous. But the restored Wilbur eyed him coldly, with just a faint curiosity that withered the humorist in him. "Well, well!" he repeated, but in dry, businesslike tones, as if he had not meant to be funny in the first place.

"I guess we'll have to be going now," said the Wilbur twin. "And we must leave all that money. It wouldn't be honest to take it now."

The Merle twin at this looked across at him with marked disfavour.

"Nonsense!" said Miss Juliana.

"Nonsense!" said Sharon Whipple.

"Take it, of course!" said Gideon Whipple.

"He's earned it fairly," said Juliana. She turned to Merle. "Give it to him," she directed.

This was not as Merle would have wished. If the money had been earned he was still willing to take care of it, wasn't he?

"A beggarly pittance for what he did," said Gideon Whipple, warmly.

"Wouldn't do it myself for twice the amount, whatever it is," said Sharon.

Very slowly, under the Whipple regard, the Merle twin poured the price of his brother's shame into his brother's cupped hands. The brother felt religious at this moment.

He remembered seriously those things they told you in Sunday-school—about a power above that watches over us and makes all come right. There must be something in that talk.

The fiscal transaction was completed. The twins looked up to become aware that their late confederate surveyed them from the doorway. Her eyes hinted of a recent stormy past, but once more she was decorously apparelled.

"Your little guests are leaving," said the stepmother. "You must bid them good-bye."

Her little guests became statues as the girl approached them.

"So glad you could come," she said, and ceremoniously shook the hand of each. The twins wielded arms rigid from the shoulder, shaking twice down and twice up. "It has been so pleasant to have you," said the girl.

"We've had a delightful time," said the Merle twin.

The other tried to echo this, but again his teeth were tightly locked, and he made but a meaningless squeak far back in his throat. He used this for the beginning of a cough, which he finished with a decent aplomb.

"You must come again," said the girl, mechanically.

"We shall be so glad to," replied the Merle twin, glancing a bright farewell to the group.

The other twin was unable to glance intelligently at any one. His eyes were now glazed. He stumbled against his well-mannered brother and heavily descended the steps.

"You earned your money!" called Sharon Whipple.

The Wilbur twin was in advance, and stayed so as they trudged down the roadway to the big gate. With his first free breath he had felt his importance as the lawful possessor of limitless wealth.

"Bright little skeesicks," said Sharon Whipple.

"But the brother is really remarkable," said Gideon—"so well-mannered, so sure of himself. He has quite a personality."

"Other has the gumption," declared Sharon.

"I've decided to have one of them for my brother," announced the girl.

"Indeed?" said Gideon.

"Well, everybody said I might have a brother, but nobody does anything about it. I will have one of those. I think the nice one that doesn't smoke."

"Poor motherless pet!" murmured the stepmother, helplessly.

"A brother is not what you need most at this time," broke in Juliana. "It's a barber."

Down the dusty road over West Hill went the twins, Wilbur still forcefully leading. His brother was becoming uneasy. There was a strange light in the other's eyes, an unwonted look of power. When they were off the hill and come to the upper end of shaded Fair Street, Merle advanced to keep pace beside his brother. The latter's rate of speed had increased as they neared the town.

"Hadn't I better take care of our money for us?" he at last asked in a voice oily with solicitude.

"No, sir!"

The "sir" was weighted with so heavy an emphasis that the tactful Merle merely said "Oh!" in a hurt tone.

"I can take care of my own money for me," added the speeding capitalist, seeming to wish that any possible misconception as to the ownership of the hoard might be definitely removed.

"Oh," said Merle again, this being all that with any dignity he could think of to say. They were now passing the quiet acre that had been the scene of the morning's unpleasantness. Their pails, half filled with berries, were still there, but the strangely behaving Wilbur refused to go for them. He eyed the place with disrelish. He would not again willingly approach that spot where he had gone down into the valley of shame. Reminded that the pails were not theirs, he brutally asked what did he care, adding that he could buy a million pails if he took a notion to. But

presently he listened to reason, and made reasonable proposals. The Merle twin was to go back to the evil place, salvage the pails, leave them at the Penniman house, and hasten to a certain confectioner's at the heart of the town, where a lavish reward would be at once his. After troubled reflection he consented, and they went their ways. The Merle twin sped to the quiet nook where Jonas Whipple had been put away in 1828, and sped away from there as soon as he had the pails. Not even did he bend a moment above the little new-made grave where lay a part of all that was mortal of Patricia Whipple. He disliked graveyards on principle, and he wished his reward.

Wilbur Cowan kept his quick way down Fair Street. He had been lifted to pecuniary eminence, and incessantly the new wealth pressed upon his consciousness. The markets of the world were at his mercy. There were shop windows outside which he had long been compelled to linger in sterile choosing. Now he could enter and buy, and he was in a hurry to be at it. Something warned him to seize his golden moment on the wing. The day was Saturday, and he was pleasantly thrilled by the unwonted crowds on River Street, which he now entered. Farm horses were tethered thickly along hitching racks and shoppers thronged the marts of trade. He threaded a way among them till he stood before the establishment of Solly Gumble, confectioner. It brought him another thrill that the people all about should be unaware of his wealth—he, laden with unsuspected treasure that sagged cool and heavy on either thigh, while they could but suppose him to be a conventionally impoverished small boy.

He tried to be cool—to calculate sanely his first expenditure. But he contrived an air of careless indecision as he sauntered through the portals of the Gumble place and lingered before the counter of choicest sweets, those so desirable that they must be guarded under glass from a loftily sampling public.

"Two of those and two of those and one of them!"

It was his first order, and brought him, for five cents, two cocoanut creams, two candied plums, and a chocolate mouse. He stood eating these while he leisurely surveyed the neighbouring delicacies. Vaguely in his mind was the thought that he might buy the place and thereafter keep store. His cheeks distended by the chocolate mouse and the last of the cocoanut creams, he now bartered for a candy cigar. It was of brown material, at the blunt end a circle of white for the ash and at its centre a brilliant square of scarlet paper for the glow, altogether a charming feat of simulation, perhaps the most delightful humoresque in all confectionery. It was priced at two cents, but what was money now?

Then, his eye roving to the loftier shelves, he spied remotely above him a stuffed blue jay mounted on a varnished branch of oak. This was not properly a part of the Gumble stock; it was a fixture, technically, giving an air to the place from its niche between two mounting rows of laden shelves.

"How much for that beautiful bird for my father?" demanded the nouveau riche.

His words were blurred by the still-resistant chocolate mouse, and he was compelled to point before Solly Gumble divined his wish. The merchant debated, removing his skullcap, smoothing his grizzled fringe of curls, fitting the cap on again deliberately. Then he turned to survey the bird, seemingly with an interest newly wakened. It was indeed a beautiful bird, brilliantly blue, with sparkling eyes; a bit dusty, but rarely desirable. The owner had not meant to part with it; still, trade was trade. He meditated, tapping his cheek with a pencil.

"How much for that beautiful bird for my father?"

He had swallowed strenuously and this time got out the words cleanly.

"Well, now, I don't hardly know. My Bertha had her cousin give her that bird. It's a costly bird. I guess you couldn't pay such a price. I guess it would cost a full half dollar, mebbe."

He had meant the price to be prohibitive, and it did shock the questioner, opulent though he was.

"Well, mebbe I will and mebbe I won't," he said, importantly. "Say, you keep him for me till I make my mind up. If anybody else comes along, don't you sell him to anybody else till I tell you, because prob'ly I'll simply buy him. My father, he loves animals."

Solly Gumble was impressed.

"Well, he's a first-class animal. He's been in that one place goin' on five years now."

"Give me two of those and two of those and one of them," said the Wilbur twin, pointing to new heart's desires.

"Say, now, you got a lot of money for a little boy," said Solly Gumble, not altogether at ease. This might be a case of embezzlement such as he had before known among his younger patrons. "You sure it's yours—yes?"

"Ho!" The Wilbur twin scorned the imputation. He was not going to tell how he had earned this wealth, but the ease of his simple retort was enough for the practical psychologist before him. "I could buy all the things in this store if I wanted to," he continued, and waved a patronizing hand to the shelves. "Give me two of those and two of those and one of them."

Solly Gumble put the latest purchase in a paper bag. Here was a patron worth conciliating. The patron sauntered to the open door to eat of his provender with lordly ease in the sight of an envious world. Calmly elate, on the cushion of advantage, he scanned the going and coming of lesser folk who could not buy at will of Solly Gumble. His fortune had gone to his head, as often it has overthrown the reason of the more mature indigent. It was thus his brother found him, and became instantly troubled at what seemed to be the insane glitter of his eyes.

He engulfed an entire chocolate mouse from his sticky left hand and with his right proffered the bag containing two of those and two of those and one of them. Merle accepted the boon silently. He was thrilled, yet distrustful.

Until now his had been the leading mind, but his power was gone. He resented this, yet was sensible that no resentment must be shown. His talent as a tactician was to be sorely tested. He gently tried out this talent.

"Winona says you ought to come home to dinner."

The magnate replied as from another world.

"I couldn't eat a mouthful," he said, and crowded a cocoanut cream into an oral cavity already distended by a chocolate mouse.

"She says, now, you should save your money and buy some useful thing with it," again ventured the parasite. It was the sign of a nicely sensed acumen that he no longer called it "our" money.

"Ho! Gee, gosh!" spluttered the rich one, and that was all.

"What we going to have next?" demanded the wise one.

"I'll have to think up something." He did not invite suggestions and none were offered. Merle nicely sensed the arrogance of the newly rich. "I know," said the capitalist at length—"candy in a lemon."

"One for each?"

"Of course!" It was no time for petty economies.

Solly Gumble parted with two lemons and two sticks of spirally striped candy of porous fabric. Then the moneyed gourmet dared a new flight.

"Two more sticks," he commanded. "You suck one stick down, then you put another in the same old lemon," he explained.

"I must say!" exclaimed Merle. It was a high moment, but he never used strong language.

When the candy had been imbedded in the lemons they sauntered out to the street, Merle meekly in the rear, the master mind still coerced by brute wealth. They paused before other shop windows, cheeks hollowed above the savory mechanism invented by Patricia Whipple. Down one side of River Street to its last shop, and up the other, they progressed haltingly. At many of the windows the

capitalist displayed interest only of the most academic character. At others he made sportive threats. Thus before the jewellery shop of Rapp Brothers he quite unnerved Merle by announcing that he could buy everything in that window if he wanted to—necklaces and rings and pins and gold watches—and he might do this. If, say, he did buy that black marble clock with the prancing gold horse on it, would Merle take it home for him? He had no intention of buying this object—he had never found clocks anything but a source of annoyance—but he toyed with the suggestion when he saw that it agitated his brother. Thereafter at other windows he wilfully dismayed his brother by pretending to consider the purchase of objects in no sense desirable to any one, such as boots, parasols, manicure sets, groceries, hardware. He played with the feel of his wealth, relishing the power it gave him over the moneyless.

And then purely to intensify this thrill of power he actually purchased at the hardware shop and carelessly bestowed upon the mendicant brother an elaborate knife with five blades and a thing which the vender said was to use in digging stones out of horses' feet. Merle was quite overcome by this gift, and neither of them suspected it to be the first step in the downfall of the capitalist. The latter, be it remembered, had bought and bestowed the knife that he might feel more acutely his power over this penniless brother, and this mean reward was abundantly his. Never before had he felt superior to the Merle twin.

But the penalties of giving are manifold, and he now felt a novel glow of sheer beneficence. He was a victim to the craze for philanthropy. Too young to realize its insidious character, he was to embark upon a ruinous career. Ever it is the first step that costs. That carelessly given knife—with something to dig stones out of a horse's foot—was to wipe out, ere night again shrouded Newbern Center, a fortune supposed to be as lasting as the eternal hills that encircled it.

They again crossed River Street, and stopped in front of the Cut-Rate Pharmacy. The windows of this establish-

ment offered little to entice save the two mammoth chalices of green and crimson liquor. But these were believed to be of fabulous value. Even the Cut-Rate Pharmacy itself could afford but one of each. Inside the door a soda fountain hissed provocatively. They took lemon and vanilla respectively, and the lordly purchaser did not take up his change from the wet marble until he had drained his glass. He had become preoccupied. He was mapping out a career of benevolence, splendid, glittering, ostentatious—ruinous.

In a show case near the soda fountain his eye rested upon an object of striking beauty, a photograph album of scarlet plush with a silver clasp, and lest its purpose be misconstrued the word "Album" writ in purest silver across its front. Negotiations resulting in its sale were brief. The Merle twin was aghast, for the cost of this thing was a dollar and forty-nine cents. Even the buyer trembled when he counted out the price in small silver and coppers. But the result was a further uplift raising him beyond the loudest call of caution. The album was placed in the ornate box—itself no mean bibelot—and wrapped in paper.

"It's for Winona," the purchaser loftily explained to his white-faced brother.

"I must say!" exclaimed the latter, strongly moved.

"I'm going to buy a beautiful present for every one," added the now fatuous giver.

"Every one!" It was all Merle could manage, and even it caused him to gulp.

"Every one," repeated the hopeless addict.

And even as he said it he was snared again, this time by an immense advertising placard propped on the counter. It hymned the virtues of the Ajax Invigorator. To the left sagged a tormented male victim of many ailments meticulously catalogued below, but in too fine print for off-hand reading by one in a hurry. The frame of the sufferer was bent, upheld by a cane, one hand poignantly resting on his back. The face was drawn with pain and despair. "For twenty years I suffered untold agonies," this person

was made to confess in large print. It was heartrending. But opposite the moribund wretch was a figure of rich health, erect, smartly dressed, with a full, smiling face and happy eyes. Surprisingly this was none other than the sufferer. One could hardly have believed them the same, but so it was. "The Ajax Invigorator made a new man of me," continued the legend. There were further details which seemed negligible to the philanthropist, because the pictured hero of the invigorator already suggested Judge Penniman, the ever-ailing father of Winona. The likeness was not wholly fanciful. True, the judge was not so abject as the first figure, but then he was not so obtrusively vigorous as the second.

"A bottle of that," said Wilbur, and pointed to the card.

The druggist thrust out a bottle already wrapped in a printed cover, and the price, as became a cut-rate pharmacy, proved to be ninety-eight cents.

A wish was now expressed that the advertising placard might also be taken in order that Judge Penniman might see just what sort of new man the invigorator would make of him. But this proved impracticable; the placard must remain where it stood for the behoof of other invalids. But there were smaller portraits of the same sufferer, it seemed, in the literature inclosing the bottle. It was the Merle twin who carried the purchases as they issued from the pharmacy. This was fitting, inevitable. The sodden philanthropist must have his hands free to spend more money.

They rested again at the Gumble counter—and now they were not alone. The acoustics of the small town are faultless, and the activities of this spendthrift had been noised abroad. To the twins, as two of those and two of those and one of them were being ordered, came four other boys to linger cordially by and assist in the selections. Hospitality was not gracefully avoidable. The four received candy cigars and became mere hangers-on of the rich, lost to all self-respect, fawning, falsely solicitous, brightly expectant. Chocolate mice were next distributed. The four guests were now so much of the party as to manifest quick hostility

to a fifth boy who had beamingly essayed to be numbered among them. They officiously snubbed and even covertly threatened this fifth boy, who none the less lingered very determinedly by the host, and was presently rewarded with sticky largesse; whereupon he was accepted by the four, and himself became hostile to another aspirant.

But mere candy began to cloy—Solly Gumble had opened the second box of chocolate mice—and the host even abandoned his reënforced lemon, which was promptly communized by the group. He tried to think of something to eat that wouldn't be candy, whereupon mounted in his mind the pyramid of watermelons a block down the street before the Bon Ton Grocery.

"We'll have a watermelon," he announced in tones of quiet authority, and his cohorts gurgled applause.

They pressed noisily about him as he went to the Bon Ton. They remembered a whale of a melon they had seen there, and said they would bet he never had enough money to buy that one. Maybe he could buy a medium-sized one, but not that. All of them kept a repellent manner for any passing boy who might be selfishly moved to join them. The spendthrift let them babble, preserving a rather grim silence. The whale of a melon was indeed a noble growth, and its price was thirty-five cents. The announcement of this caused a solemn hush to fall upon the sycophants; a hush broken by the cool, masterful tones of their host.

"I'll take her," he said, and paid the fearful price from a still weighty pocket. To the stoutest of the group went the honour of bearing off the lordly burden. They turned into a cool alley that led to the rear of the shops. Here in comparative solitude the whale of a melon could be consumed and the function be unmarred by the presence of volunteer guests.

"Open her," ordered the host, and the new knife was used to open her.

She proved to be but half ripe, but her size was held to atone for this defect. A small, unripe melon would have

been returned to the dealer with loud complaining, but it seemed to be held that you couldn't expect everything from one of this magnitude. It was devoured to the rind, after which the convives reclined luxuriously upon a mound of excelsior beside an empty crate.

"Pennygrabs!" cried the host with a fresh inspiration, and they cheered him.

One of the five volunteered to go for them and the money-drunken host confided the price of three of them to him. The messenger honorably returned, the pennygrabs were bisected with the new knife, and all of them but Merle smoked enjoyably. He, going back to his candy and lemon, admonished each and all that smoking would stunt their growth. It seemed not greatly to concern any of them. They believed Merle implicitly, but what cared they?

Now the messenger in buying the pennygrabs had gabbled wildly to another boy of the sensational expenditures under way, and this boy, though incredulous, now came to a point in the alley from which he could survey the fed group. The remains of the whale of a melon were there to convince him. They were trifling remains, but they sufficed, and the six fuming halves of pennygrabs were confirmatory. The scout departed rapidly, to return a moment later with two other boys. One of the latter led a dog.

The three newcomers, with a nice observance of etiquette, surveyed the revellers from a distance. Lacking decent provocation, they might not approach a group so plainly engaged upon affairs of its own—unless they went aggressively, and this it did not yet seem wise to do. The revellers became self-conscious under this scrutiny. They were moved to new displays of wealth.

"I smelled 'em cookin' bologna in the back room of Hire's butcher shop," remarked the bringer of the pennygrabs. "It smelt grand."

The pliant host needed no more. He was tinder to such a spark.

"Get a quarter's worth, Howard," and the slave bounded

off, to return with a splendid rosy garland of the stuff, still warm and odorous.

Again the new knife of Merle was used. The now widely diffused scent of bologna reached the three watchers, and appeared to madden one of them beyond any restraint of good manners. He sauntered toward them, pretending not to notice the banquet until he was upon it. He was a desperate-appearing fellow—dark, saturnine, with a face of sullen menace.

"Give us a hunk," he demanded.

He should have put it more gently. He should have condescended a little to the amenities, for his imperious tone at once dried a generous spring of philanthropy. He was to regret this lack of a mere superficial polish that would have cost him nothing.

"Ho! Go buy it like we did!" retorted the host, crisply.

"Is that so?" queried the newcomer with rising warmth.

"Yes, sat's so!"

"Who says it's so?"

"I say it's so!"

This was seemingly futile; seemingly it got them nowhere, for the newcomer again demanded: "Is that so?"

They seemed to have followed a vicious circle. But in reality they were much farther along, for the mendicant had carelessly worked himself to a point where he could reach for the half circle of bologna still undivided, and the treasure was now snatched from this fate by the watchful legal owner.

"Hold that!" he commanded one of his creatures, and rose quickly to his feet.

"Is that so?" repeated the unimaginative newcomer.

"Yes, that's so!" affirmed the Wilbur twin once again.

"I guess I got as much right here as you got!"

This was a shifty attempt to cloud the issue. No one had faintly questioned his right to be there.

"Ho! Gee, gosh!" snapped the Wilbur twin, feeling vaguely that this was irrelevant talk.

"Think you own this whole town, don't you?" demanded the aggressor.

"Ho! I guess I own it as much as what you do!"

The Wilbur twin knew perfectly that this was not the true issue, yet he felt compelled to accept it.

"For two beans I'd punch you in the eye."

"Oh, you would, would you?" Each of the disputants here took a step backward.

"Yes, I would, would you!" This was a try at mockery.

"Yes, you would not!"

"Yes, I would!"

"You're a big liar!"

The newcomer at this betrayed excessive rage.

"What's that? You just say that again!" He seemed unable to believe his shocked ears.

"You heard what I said—you big liar, liar, liar!"

"You take that back!"

Here the newcomer flourished clinched fists and began to prance. The Wilbur twin crouched, but was otherwise motionless. The newcomer continued to prance alarmingly and to wield his arms as if against an invisible opponent. Secretly he had no mind to combat. His real purpose became presently clear. It was to intimidate and confuse until he should be near enough the desired delicacy to snatch it and run. He was an excellent runner. His opponent perceived this—the evil glance of desire and intention under all the flourish of arms. Something had to be done. Without warning he leaped upon the invader and bore him to earth. There he punched, jabbed, gouged, and scratched as they writhed together. A moment of this and the prostrate foe was heard to scream with the utmost sincerity. The Wilbur twin was startled, but did not relax his hold.

"You let me up from here!" the foe was then heard to cry.

The Wilbur twin watchfully rose from his mount, breathing heavily. He seized his cap and drew it tightly over dishevelled locks.

"I guess that'll teach you a good lesson!" he warned when he had breath for it.

The vanquished Hun got to his feet, one hand over an eye. He was abundantly blemished and his nose bled. His sense of dignity had been outraged and his head hurt.

"You get the hell and gone out of here!" shouted the Wilbur twin, quite as if he did own the town.

"I must say! Cursing and swearing!" shrilled the Merle twin, but none heeded him.

The repulsed enemy went slowly to the corner of the alley. Here he turned to recover a moment of dignity.

"You just wait till I catch you out some day!" he roared back with gestures meant to terrify. But this was his last flash. He went on his way, one hand still to the blighted eye.

Now it developed that the two boys who had waited the Hun had profited cunningly by the brawl. They had approached at its beginning—a fight was anybody's to watch—they had applauded its dénouement with shrill and hearty cries, and they now felicitated the victor.

"Aw, that old Tod McNeil thinks he can fight!" said one, and laughed in harsh derision.

"I bet this kid could lick him any day in the week!" observed his companion.

This boy, it was now seen, led a dog on a rope, a half-grown dog that would one day be large. He was now heavily clad in silken wool of richly mixed colours—brown, yellow, and bluish gray—and his eyes were still the pale blue of puppyhood.

Both newcomers had learned the unwisdom of abrupt methods of approaching this wealthy group. They conducted themselves with modesty; they were polite, even servile, saying much in praise of the warrior twin. The one with the dog revealed genius for this sort of thing, and insisted on feeling the warrior's muscle. The flexed bicep appeared to leave him aghast at its hardness and immensity. He insisted that his companion should feel it, too.

"Have some bologna?" asked the warrior. He would

doubtless have pressed bologna now on Tod McNeil had that social cull stayed by.

"Oh!" said the belated guests, surprised at the presence of bologna thereabouts.

They uttered profuse thanks for sizable segments of the now diminished circle. It was then that the Wilbur twin took pleased notice of the dog. He was a responsive animal, grateful for notice from any one. Receiving a morsel of the bologna he instantly engulfed it and overwhelmed the giver with rough but hearty attentions.

"Knows me already," said the now infatuated Wilbur.

"Sure he does!" agreed the calculating owner. "He's a smart dog. He's the smartest dog ever I see, and I seen a good many dogs round this town."

"Have some more bologna," said Wilbur.

"Thanks," said the dog owner, "just a mite."

The dog, receiving another bit, gave further signs of knowing the donor. No cynic was present to intimate that the animal would instantly know any giver of bologna.

"What's his name?" demanded Wilbur.

The owner hesitated. He had very casually acquired the animal but a few hours before; he now attached no value to him, and was minded to be rid of him, nor had the dog to his knowledge any name whatever.

"His name is Frank," he said, his imagination being slow to start.

"Here, Frank! Here, Frank!" called Wilbur, and the dog leaped for more bologna.

"See, he knows his name all right," observed the owner, pridefully.

"I bet you wouldn't sell him for anything," suggested Wilbur.

"Sell good old Frank?" The owner was painfully shocked. "No, I couldn't hardly do that," he said more gently. "He's too valuable. My little sister just worships him."

The other guests were bored at this hint of commerce.

They had no wish to see good money spent for a dog that no one could eat.

"He don't look to me like so much of a dog," remarked one of these. "He looks silly to me."

The owner stared at the speaker unpleasantly.

"Oh, he does, does he? I guess that shows what you know about dogs. If you knew so much about 'em like you say I guess you'd know this kind always does look that way. It's—it's the way they look," he floundered, briefly, but recovered. "That's how you can tell 'em," he concluded.

The Wilbur twin was further impressed, though he had not thought the dog looked silly at all.

"I'll give you a quarter for him," he declared bluntly.

There was a sensation among the guests. Some of them made noises to show that they would regard this as a waste of money. But the owner was firm.

"Huh! I bet they ain't money enough in this whole crowd to buy that dog, even if I was goin' to sell him!"

The wishful Wilbur jingled coins in both pockets.

"I guess he wouldn't be much of a fighting dog," he said.

"Fight!" exploded the owner. "You talk about fight! Say, that's all he is—just a fighter! He eats 'em alive, that's all he does—eats 'em!" This was for some of them not easy at once to believe, for the dog's expression was one of simpering amiability. The owner seemed to perceive this discrepancy. "He looks peaceful, but you git him mad once, that's all! He's that kind—you got to git him mad first." This sounded reasonable, at least to the dog's warmest admirer.

"Yes, sir," continued the owner, "you'll be goin' along the street with George here——"

"George who?" demanded a skeptical guest.

For a moment the owner was disconcerted.

"Well, Frank is his right name, only my little sister calls him George sometimes, and I get mixed. Anyway, you'll be goin' along the street with Frank and another dog'll come up and he's afraid of Frank and mebbe he'll just kind

of clear his throat or something on account of feeling nervous and not meaning anything, but Frank'll think he's growling, and that settles it. Eats 'em alive! I seen some horrible sights, I want to tell you!"

"Give you thirty-five cents for him," said the impressed Wilbur.

"For that there dog?" exploded the owner—"thirty-five cents?" He let it be seen that this jesting was in poor taste.

"I guess he wouldn't be much of a watchdog."

"Watchdog! Say, that mutt watches all the time, day and night! You let a burglar come sneaking in, or a tramp or someone—wow! Grabs 'em by the throat, that's all!"

"Fifty cents!" cried the snared Cowan twin. Something told the owner this would be the last raise.

"Let's see the money!"

He saw it, and the prodigy, Frank, sometimes called George by the owner's little sister, had a new master. The Wilbur twin tingled through all his being when the end of the rope leash was placed in his hand.

A tradesman now descried them from the rear door of his shop. He saw smoke from the relighted pennygrabs and noted the mound of excelsior.

"Hi, there!" he called, harshly. "Beat it outa there! What you want to do—set the whole town afire?"

Of course nothing of this sort had occurred to them, but only Merle answered very politely, "No, sir!" The others merely moved off, holding the question silly. Wilbur Cowan stalked ahead with his purchase.

"I hate just terrible to part with him," said the dog's late owner.

"Come on to Solly Gumble's," said Wilbur, significantly. He must do something to heal this hurt.

The mob followed gleefully. The Wilbur twin was hoping they would meet no other dog. He didn't want good old Frank to eat another dog right on the street.

Back in Solly Gumble's he bought lavishly for his eight guests. The guests were ideal; none of them spoke of hav-

ing to leave early, though the day was drawing in. And none of the guests noted that the almost continuous stream of small coin flowing to the Gumble till came now but from one pocket of the host. Yet hardly a guest but could eat from either hand as he chose. It was a scene of Babylonian profligacy—even the late owner of Frank joined in the revel full-spiritedly, and it endured to a certain moment of icy realization, suffered by the host. It came when Solly Gumble, in the midst of much serving, bethought him of the blue jay.

"I managed to save him for you," he told the Wilbur twin, and reached down the treasure. With a cloth he dusted the feathers and tenderly wiped the eyes. "A first-class animal for fifty cents," he said—"and durable. He'll last a lifetime if you be careful of him—keep him in the parlour just to be pretty."

The munching revellers gathered about with interest. There seemed no limit to the daring of this prodigal. Then there came upon the Wilbur twin a moment of sinister calculation. A hand sank swiftly into a pocket and brought up a scant few nickels and pennies. Amid a thickening silence he counted these remaining coins.

Then in deadly tones he declared to Solly Gumble, "I only got forty-eight cents left!"

"Oh, my! I must say! Spent all his money!" shrilled the Merle twin on a note of triumph that was yet bitter.

"Spent all his money!" echoed the shocked courtiers, and looked upon him coldly. Some of them withdrew across the store and in low tones pretended to discuss the merits of articles in another show case.

"I guess you couldn't let me have him for forty-eight cents," said the Wilbur twin hopelessly.

Solly Gumble removed his skullcap, fluffed his scanty ring of curls, and drew on the cap again. His manner was judicial but not repellent.

"Mebbe I could—mebbe I couldn't," he said. "You sure you ain't got two cents more in that other pocket, hey?"

The Wilbur twin searched, but it was the most arid of formalities.

"No, sir; I spent it all."

"Spent all his money!" remarked the dog seller with a kind of pitying contempt, and drew off toward the door. Two more of the courtiers followed as unerringly as if trained in palaces. Solly Gumble bent above the counter.

"Well, now, you young man, you listen to me. You been a right good customer, treating all your little friends so grand, so I tell you straight—you take that fine bird for forty-eight cents. Not to many would I come down, but to you—yes."

Wilbur Cowan, overcome, mumbled his thanks. He was alone at the counter now, Merle having joined the withdrawn courtiers.

"I'm a fair trader," said Solly Gumble. "I can take—I give. Here now!" And amazingly he extended to the penniless wreck a large and golden orange, perhaps one of the largest oranges ever grown.

The recipient was again overcome. He blushed as he thanked this open-handed tradesman. Then with his blue jay, his orange, his dog, he turned away. Now he first became aware of the changed attitude of his late dependents. It did not distress him. It seemed wholly natural, this icy withdrawal of their fellowship. Why should they push about him any longer? He was, instead, rather concerned to defend his spendthrift courses.

"Spent all his money!" came a barbed jeer from the Merle twin.

The ruined one stalked by him with dignity, having remembered a fine speech he had once heard his father make.

"Oh, well," he said, lightly, "easy come, easy go!"

The Merle twin still bore the album and the potent invigorator that was to make a new man of Judge Penniman. His impoverished brother carried the blue jay, looking alert and lifelike in the open, the mammoth orange, gift for Mrs. Penniman—he had nearly forgotten her—and tenderly he led the dog, Frank. Not to have all his money again would

he have parted with his treasures and the memory of supreme delights. Not for all his squandered fortune would he have bartered Frank, the dog. Frank capered at his side, ever and again looking up brightly at his new master. Never had so much attention been shown him. Never before had he been confined by a leash, as if he were a desirable dog.

Opposite the Mansion House, Newbern's chief hotel, Frank gave signal proof of his intelligence. From across River Street he had been espied by Boodles, the Mansion House dog, a creature of dusty, pinkish white, of short neck and wide jaws, of a clouded but still definite bull ancestry. Boodles was a dog about town, wearing many scars of combat, a swashbuckler of a dog, rough-mannered, raffish; if not actually quarrelsome, at least highly sensitive where his honour was concerned. He made it a point to know every dog in town, and as he rose from a sitting posture, where he had been taking the air before his inn, it could be observed that Frank was new to him—certainly new and perhaps objectionable. He stepped lightly halfway across the now empty street and stopped for a further look. He seemed to be saying, "Maybe it ain't a dog, after all." But the closer look and a lifted nose wrinkling into the breeze set him right. He left for a still closer look at what was unquestionably a dog.

The Wilbur twin became concerned for Boodles. He regarded him highly. But he knew that Boodles was a fighter, and Frank ate them up. He commanded Boodles to go back, but though he had slowed his pace and now halted a dozen feet from Frank, the cannibal, Boodles showed that he was not going back until he had some better reason. Violence of the cruellest sort seemed forward. But perhaps Frank might be won from his loathly practice.

"You, Frank, be quiet, sir!" ordered Wilbur, though Frank had not been unquiet. "Be still, sir!" he added, and threatened his pet with an open palm. But Frank had attention only for Boodles, who now approached, little recking his fate. The clash was at hand.

"Be still, sir!" again commanded Wilbur in anguished tones, whereupon the obedient Frank tumbled to lie upon his back, four limp legs in air, turning his head to simper up at Boodles, who stood inquiringly above him. Boodles then sniffed an amiable contempt and ran back to his hotel. Frank strained at his leash to follow. His proud owner thought there could be few dogs in all the world so biddable as this.

The twins went on. Merle was watching his chance to recover that spiritual supremacy over the other that had been his until the accident of wealth had wrenched it from him.

"You'll catch it for keeping us out so late," he warned—"and cursing and fighting and spending all your money!"

The other scarce heard him. He walked through shining clouds far above an earth where one catches it.

CHAPTER III

THE PENNIMAN house, white, with green blinds, is set back from the maple-and-elm-shaded street, guarded by a white picket fence. Between the house and gate a green lawn was crossed by a gravelled walk, with borders of phlox; beyond the borders, on either side, were flowering shrubs, and at equal distances from the walk, circular beds of scarlet tulips and yellow daffodils. Detached from the Penniman house, but still in the same yard, was a smaller, one-storied house, also white, with green blinds, tenanted by Dave Cowan and his twins, who—in Newbern vernacular—mealed with Mrs. Penniman. It had been the Cowan home when Dave married the Penniman cousin who had borne the twins. There was a path worn in the grass between the two houses.

On the Penniman front porch the judge was throned in a wicker chair. He was a nobly fronted old gentleman, with imposing head, bald at the top but tastefully hung with pale, fluffy side curls. His face was wide and full, smoothly shaven, his cheeks pink, his eyes a pure, pale blue. He was clad in a rumpled linen suit the trousers of which were drawn well up his plump legs above white socks and low black shoes, broad and loose fitting. As the shadows had lengthened and the day cooled he abandoned a palm-leaf fan he had been languidly waving. His face at the moment glowed with animation, for he played over the deciding game in that day's match at checkers by which, at the harness shop, he had vanquished an acclaimed rival from over Higgston way. The fellow had been skilled beyond the average, but supremacy was still with the Newbern champion. So absorbed was he, achieving again that last bit of strategy by which he had

gained the place to capture two men and reach the enemy's king row, that his soft-stepping daughter, who had come from the house, had to address him twice.

"Have you had a good day, father?"

The judge was momentarily confused. He had to recall that his invalidism, not his checker prowess, was in question. He regained his presence of mind; he coughed feebly, reaching a hand tenderly back to a point between his shoulder blades.

"Not one of my real bad days, Winona. I can't really say I've suffered. Stuff that other cushion in back of me, will you? I got a new pain kind of in this left shoulder—neuralgia, mebbe. But my sciatica ain't troubled me—not too much."

Winona adjusted the cushion.

"You're so patient, father!"

"I try to be, Winona," which was simple truth.

A sufferer for years, debarred by obscure ailments from active participation in our industrial strife, the judge, often for days at a time, would not complain unless pressed to—quite as if he had forgotten his pains. The best doctors disagreed about his case, none of them able to say precisely what his maladies were. True, one city doctor, a visiting friend of the Pennimans' family physician, had once gone carefully over him, punching, prodding, listening, to announce that nothing ailed the invalid; which showed, as the judge had said to his face, that he was nothing but an impudent young squirt. He had never revealed this parody of a diagnosis to his anxious family, who always believed the city doctor had found something deadly that might at any time carry off the patient sufferer.

The judge was also bitter about Christian Science, and could easily be led to expose its falsity. He would wittily say it wasn't Christian and wasn't science; merely the chuckleheadedness of a lot of women. This because a local adept of the cult had told him, and—what was worse—told Mrs. Penniman and Winona that if he didn't quit thinking

he was an invalid pretty soon he would really have something the matter with him.

And he had incurred another offensive diagnosis: Old Doc Purdy, the medical examiner, whose sworn testimony had years before procured the judge his pension as a Civil War veteran, became brutal about it. Said Purdy: "I had to think up some things that would get the old cuss his money and dummed if he didn't take it all serious and think he did have 'em!"

The judge had been obliged to abandon all thoughts of a career. Years before he had been Newbern's justice of the peace, until a gang of political tricksters defeated the sovereign will of the people. And perhaps he would again have accepted political honours, but none had been offered him. Still, the family was prosperous. For in addition to the pension, Mrs. Penniman kept a neat card in one of the front windows promising "Plain and Fancy Dressmaking Done Here," and Winona now taught school.

Having adjusted the cushion, Winona paused before the cage of a parrot on a stand at the end of the porch. The bird sidled over to her on stiff legs, cocked upon her a leering, yellow eye and said in wheedling tones, "Pretty girl, pretty girl!" But then it harshly screeched, "Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!" This laughter was discordant, cynical, derisive, as if the bird relished a tasteless jest.

Winona went to the hammock and resumed an open book. Its title was "Matthew Arnold—How to Know Him." She was getting up in Matthew Arnold for a paper. Winona at twenty was old before she should have been. She was small and dark, with a thin nose and pinched features. Her dark hair, wound close to her small head, was pretty enough, and her dark eyes were good, but she seemed to carry almost the years of her mother. She was an earnest girl, severe in thought, concerned about her culture, seeking to subdue a nature which she profoundly distrusted to an ideal she would have described as one of elegance and refinement. The dress she wore was one of her best—for an exemplary

young man would call that evening, bringing his choice silver flute upon which he would play justly if not brilliantly to Winona's piano accompaniment—but it was dull of tint, one of her mother's plain, not fancy, creations. Still Winona felt it was daring, because the collar was low and sported a fichu of lace. This troubled her, even as she renewed the earnest effort to know Matthew Arnold. She doubtfully fingered at her throat a tiny chain that supported a tiny pendant. She slipped the thing under the neck of her waist. She feared that with her low neck—she thought of it as low—the bauble would be flashy.

Mrs. Penniman came from the kitchen and sat on the porch steps. She was much like Winona, except that certain professional touches of colour at waist, neck, and wrists made her appear, in spirit at least, the younger woman. There were times when Winona suffered herself to doubt her mother's seriousness; times when the woman appeared a slave to levity. She would laugh at things Winona considered no laughing matters, and her sympathy with her ailing husband had come to be callous and matter of fact, almost perfunctory. She longed, moreover, to do fancy dressmaking for her child; and there was the matter of the silk stockings. The Christmas before the too downright Dave Cowan, in a low spirit of banter, had gifted Winona with these. They were of tan silk, and Dave had challenged her to wear them for the good of her soul.

Winona had been quite unpleasantly shocked at Dave's indelicacy, but her mother had been frivolous throughout the affair. Her mother said, too, that she would like to wear silk stockings at all times. But Winona—she spoke of the gift as hose—put the sinister things away at the bottom of her third bureau drawer. Once, indeed, she had nearly nerved herself to a public appearance in them, knowing that perfectly good women often did this. That had been the day she was to read her paper on Early Greek Sculpture at the Entre Nous Club. She had put them on with her new tan pumps, but the effect had been too daring. She

felt the ogling eyes. The stockings had gone back to the third bureau drawer—to the bottom—and never had her ankles flashed a silken challenge to a public that might misunderstand.

Yet—and this it was that was making Winona old before her time—always in her secret heart of hearts she did long abjectly to wear silk stockings—all manner of sinful silken trifles. Evil yearnings like this would sweep her. But she took them to be fruits of a natural depravity that good women must fight. Thus far she had triumphed.

Mrs. Penniman now wielded the palm-leaf fan. She eyed her husband with an almost hardened glance, then ran a professional eye over the lines of Winona. Her head moved with quick little birdlike turnings. Her dark hair was less orderly than Winona's, and—from her kitchen work—two spots of colour burned high on her cheeks.

"Your locket's slipped inside your waist," she said, not dreaming that Winona had in shame brought this about.

Winona, who would have been shamed again to explain this, withdrew the bauble. The fond mother now observed the book above which her daughter bent, twisting her neck to follow the title.

"Is it interesting?" she asked; and then: "The way to know a man—cook for him."

Her daughter winced, suffering a swift picture of her too-light mother, cooking for Mr. Arnold.

"I should think you'd pick out a good novel to read," went on her mother. "That last one I got from the library—it's about a beautiful woman that counted the world well lost for love."

Winona murmured indistinctly.

"She didn't—she didn't stop at anything," added the mother, brightly.

"Oh, Mother!"

"I don't care! The Reverend Mallett himself said that novels should be read for an understanding of life—even

novels with a wholesome sex interest. The very words he said!"

"Mother, Mother!" protested Winona with a quick glance at her father.

She doubted if any sex interest could be wholesome; and surely, with both sexes present, the less said about such things the better. To her relief the perilous topic was abandoned.

"I suppose you both heard the big news to-day."

Mrs. Penniman spoke ingenuously, but it was downright lying—no less. She supposed they had not heard the big news. She was certain they had not. Winona was attentive. Her mother's business of plain and fancy dressmaking did not a little to make the acoustics of Newbern superior. From her clients she gleaned the freshest chronicles of Newbern's social life, many being such as one might safely repeat; many more, Winona uncomfortably recalled, the sort no good woman would let go any further. She hoped the imminent disclosure would not be of the latter class, yet suddenly she wished to hear it even if it were. She affected to turn with reluctance from her budding acquaintanceship with Matthew Arnold.

"It's the twins," began her mother with a look of pleased horror. "You couldn't guess in all day what they've been up to."

"You may be sure Wilbur was the one to blame," put in Winona, quick to defend the one most responsive to her lessons in faith, morals, etiquette.

"Ought to be soundly trounced," declared the judge. "That's what I always say."

"This is the worst yet," continued Mrs. Penniman.

She liked the suspense she had created. With an unerring gift for oral narrative, she toyed with this. She must first tell how she got it.

"You know that georgette waist Mrs. Ed Seaver is having?"

"Have they done something awful?" Winona demanded. "I perfectly well know it wasn't Merle's fault."

"Well, Mrs. Seaver came in about four o'clock for her final fitting, and what do you think?"

"For mercy's sake!" pleaded Winona.

"And Ed Seaver had been to the barber shop to have his hair cut—he always gets it cut the fifteenth of each month—well, he found out all about it from Don Paley, that they'd had to send for to come to the Whipple New Place to cut it neatly off after the way it had been sawed off rough, and she told me word for word. Well, it's unbelievable, and every one saying something ought to be done about it—you just never would be able to guess!"

Winona snapped shut the volume so rich in promise and leaned forward to face her mother desperately. Mrs. Penniman here coughed in a refined and artificial manner as a final preliminary. The parrot instantly coughed in the same manner, and—seeming to like it—again became Mrs. Penniman in a series of mild, throaty preliminary coughs, as if it would presently begin to tell something almost too good. The real tale had to be suspended again for this.

"Well," resumed Mrs. Penniman, feeling that the last value had been extracted from mere suspense, "anyway, it seems that this morning poor little Patricia Whipple was going by the old graveyard, and the twins jumped out and knocked her down and dragged her in there away from the road and simply tore every stitch of clothes off her back and made her dress up in Wilbur's clothes——"

"There!" gasped the horrified Winona. "Didn't I say it would be Wilbur?"

"And then what did they do but cut off her braid with a knife!"

"Wilbur's knife—Merle hasn't any."

"And the Lord knows what the little fiends would have done next, but Juliana Whipple happened to be passing, and heard the poor child's screams and took her away from them."

"That dreadful, dreadful Wilbur!" cried Winona.

"Reform school," spoke the judge, as if he uttered it from the bench.

"But something queer," went on Mrs. Penniman. "Juliana took the twins home in the pony cart, with Wilbur wearing Patricia's dress—it's a plaid gingham I made myself—and someone gave him a lot of money and let him go, and they didn't give Merle any because Ed Seaver saw them on River Street, and Wilbur had it all. And what did Patricia Whipple say to Don Paley but that she was going to have one of the twins for her brother, because no one else would get her a brother, and so she must. But what would she want one of those little cutthroats for? That's what puzzles me."

"Merle is not a cutthroat," said Winona with tightening lips. "He never will be a cutthroat." She left all manner of permissible suspicions about his brother.

"Well, it just beat me!" confessed her mother. "Maybe they've been reading Wild West stories."

"Wilbur, perhaps," insisted Winona. "Merle is already very choice in his reading."

"A puzzle, anyway—why, there they come!"

And the manner of their coming brought more bewilderment to the house of Penniman. For the criminal Wilbur did not come shamed and slinking, but with rather an uplift. Behind him gloomily trod the Merle twin. Even at a distance he was disapproving, accusatory, put upon. It was to be seen that he washed his hands of the evil.

"Whatever in the world——" began Mrs. Penniman, for Wilbur in the hollow of his arm bore a forked branch upon which seemed to perch in all confidence a free bird of the wilds.

"A stuffed bird!" said the peering Winona, and dispelled this illusion.

The twins entered the gate. Midway up the gravelled walk Wilbur Cowan began a gurgling oration.

"I bet nobody can guess what I brought! Yes, sir—a beautiful present for every one—that will make a new man of poor old Judge Penniman, and this lovely orange—that's for Mrs. Penniman—and I bet Winona can't guess what's

wrapped up in this box for her—it's the most beautiful album, and this first-class animal for my father, and it'll last a lifetime if he takes care of it good; and I got me a dog to watch the house." Breathless he paused.

"Spent all his money!" intoned Merle. "And he bought me this knife, too."

He displayed it, but merely as a count in the indictment for criminal extravagance. He had gone to the hammock to sit by Winona. He needed her. He had been too long unconsidered.

The sputtering gift-bringer bestowed the orange upon Mrs. Penniman, the album upon Winona, and the invigorator upon the now embarrassed judge.

"Thank you, Wilbur, dear!" Mrs. Penniman was first to recover her poise.

"Thanks ever so much," echoed Winona, doubtfully.

She must first know that he had come by this money righteously. The judge adjusted spectacles to read the label on his gift.

"Thank you, my boy. The stuff may give me temporary relief."

He had felt affronted that any one could suppose one bottle of anything would make a new man of him; and—inconsistently enough—affronted that any one should suppose he needed to be made a new man of. He had not liked the phrase at all.

"And now perhaps you will tell us——" began Winona, her lips again tightening. But the Wilbur twin could not yet be brought down to mere history.

"This is an awful fighting dog," he was saying. "He's called Frank, and he eats them up. Yes, sir, he nearly et up that old Boodles dog just now. He would of if I hadn't stopped him. He minds awful well."

"Spent all *our* money!" declaimed Merle in a public-school voice, using "our" for the first time since his defeat of the morning. Certain of Winona's support, it had again become their money. "And cursing, swearing, fighting, smoking!"

"Oh, Wilbur!" exclaimed the shocked Winona; yet there was dismay more than rebuke in her tone, for she had brought the album to view. "If you've been a bad boy perhaps I should not accept this lovely gift from you. Remember—we don't yet know how you obtained all this money."

"Ho! I earned that money good! That old fat Mr. Whipple said I earned it good. He said he wouldn't of done what I done——"

"Did, dear!"

"— wouldn't of did what I did for twice the money."

"And what was it you did?"

Winona spoke gently, as a friend. But Wilbur rubbed one bare foot against and over the other. He was not going to tell that shameful thing, even to these people.

"Oh, I didn't do much of anything," he muttered.

"But what was it?"

The judge interrupted.

"It says half a wineglassful before meals. Daughter, will you bring me the wineglass?"

The Pennimans kept a wineglass. The judge found a corkscrew attached to the bottle, and sipped his draft under the absorbed regard of the group. "It feels like it might give some temporary relief," he admitted, savoring the last drops.

"You go right down to the drug store and look at that picture; you'll see then what it'll do for you," urged the donor.

"What else did the Whipples say to you?" wheedled Winona.

The Wilbur twin again hung embarrassed.

"Well—well, there's a cruel stepmother, but now she wasn't cruel to me. She said I was a nice boy, and gave me back my pants."

"Gave you back——"

Winona enacted surprise.

"I had to have my pants, didn't I? I couldn't go out without any, could I? And she took me to a pantry and

give me a big hunk of cake with raisins in it, and a big slice of apple pie, and a big glass of milk."

"I must say! And she never gave me a thing!" Merle's bitterness grew.

"And she kissed me twice, and—and said I was a nice boy."

"You already said that," reminded the injured brother.

"And she didn't act cruel to me once, even if she is a stepmother."

"But how did you come to be without your——"

Wilbur was again reprieved from her grilling. The Penniman cat, Mouser, a tawny, tigerish beast, had leaped to the porch. With set eyes and quivering tail it advanced crouchingly, one slow step at a time, noiseless, sinister. Only when poised for its final spring upon the helpless prey was it seen that Mouser stalked the blue jay on its perch. Wilbur, with a cry of alarm, snatched the treasure from peril. Mouser leaped to the porch railing to lick her lips in an evil manner.

"You will, will you?" Wilbur stormed at her. Yet he was pleased, too, for Mouser's attempt was testimony to the bird's merit. "She thought it was real," he said, proudly.

"But how did you come to have your clothes——" began Winona sweetly once more, and again the twin was saved from shuffling answers.

The dog, Frank, sniffing up timidly at Mouser on the porch rail, displeased her. From her perch she leaned down to curse him hissingly, with arched back and swollen tail, a potent forearm with drawn claws curving forward in menace.

"You will, will you?" demanded Wilbur again, freeing his legs from the leash in which the dismayed dog had entwined them.

Frank now fell on his back with limp paws in air and simpered girlishly up at his envenomed critic on the railing.

"We got to keep that old cat out the way. He eats 'em up—that's all he does, eats 'em! It's a good thing I was here to make him mind me."

"But how did you come to have your clothes——" resumed Winona.

This time it was Dave Cowan who thwarted her with a blithe hail from the gate. Winona gave it up. Merle had been striving to tell her what she wished to know. Later she would let him.

Dave swaggered up the walk, a gay and gallant figure in his blue cutaway coat, his waistcoat of most legible plaid, fit ground for the watch chain of heavy golden links. He wore a derby hat and a fuming calabash pipe, removing both for a courtly bow to the ladies. His yellow hair had been plastered low on his brow, to be swept back each side of the part in a gracious curve; his thick yellow moustache curled jauntily upward, to show white teeth as he smiled. At first glance he was smartly apparelled, but below the waist Dave always diminished rapidly in elegance. His trousers were of another pattern from the coat, not too accurate of fit, and could have been pressed to advantage, while the once superb yellow shoes were tarnished and sadly worn. The man was richly and variously scented. There were the basic and permanent aromas of printer's ink and pipe tobacco; above these like a mist were the rare unguents lately applied by Don Paley, the barber, and a spicy odour of strong drink. As was not unusual on a Saturday night, Dave would have passed some relaxing moments at the liquor saloon of Herman Vielhaber.

"I hope I see you well, duchess!"

This was for Mrs. Penniman, and caused her to bridle as she fancied a saluted duchess might. It was the humour of Dave to suppose this lady a peeress of the old régime, one who had led far too gay a life and, come now to a dishonoured old age, was yet cynical and unrepentant. Winona also he affected to believe an ornament of the old noblesse, a creature of maddening beauty, but without heart, so that despairing suitors slew themselves for her. His debased fancy would at times further have it that Judge Penniman was Louis XVIII, though at this moment, observing that the ladies were preoccupied with one of his sons, he paused by the in-

valid and expertly from a corner of his mouth whispered the coarse words, "Hello, Old Flapdoodle!" From some remnant of sex loyalty he would not address the sufferer thus when his womenfolk could overhear, but the judge could never be sure of the jester's discretion. Besides, Dave was from day to day earnestly tutoring the parrot to say the base words, and the judge knew that Polly, once master of them, would use no discretion whatever. He glared at Dave Cowan in hearty but silent rage. Dave turned from him to kneel at the feet of Winona.

"'A book of verses underneath the bow——'" he began.

Winona shuddered. She knew what was coming; dreadful, licentious stuff from a so-called poet—far, far different from dear Tennyson, thought Winona—who sang the joys of profligacy. Winona turned from the recitationist.

"What? Repulsed again? Ah, well, there's always the river! Duchess, bear witness, 'twas her coldness drove me to the rash act—she with her beauty that maddens all beholders!"

Winona was shocked, yet not unpleasantly, at these monstrous implications. She dreaded to have him begin—and yet she would have him. She tried to sign to him now that matters were to the fore too grave for clumsy fooling, but he only took the book from her hand to read its title.

"'Matthew Arnold—How to Know Him,'" he read. "Ah, yes! Ah, yes! But is he worth knowing?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Winona, wincing.

"No respect for God or man," mumbled the judge, meaning that a creature capable of calling him Old Flapdoodle could be expected to ask if Matthew Arnold were worth knowing.

The Wilbur twin here thrust the blue jay upon his father with cordial words. Dave professed to be entranced with the gift. It appeared that he had always longed for a stuffed blue jay. He curled a finger to it and called, "Tweet! Tweet!" a bit of comedy poignantly relished by the donor of the bird

His father now ceremoniously conducted Mrs. Penniman to what he spoke of as the banqueting hall. He made almost a minuet of their progress. Under one arm he carried his bird to place it on the table, where later during the meal he would convulse the Wilbur twin by affecting to feed it bits of bread. Winona still hungered for details of the day's tragedy, but Dave must talk of other things. He talked far too much, the judge believed. He had just made the invalid uncomfortable by disclosing that the Ajax Invigorator had an alcoholic content of at least fifty-five per cent. He said that for this reason it would afford temporary relief to almost any one. He added that it would be cheap stuff, and harmful, and that if a man wished to drink he ought to go straight to Vielhaber's, where they kept an excellent line of Ajax Invigorators and sold them under their right names. The judge said "Stuff and nonsense" to this, but the ladies believed, for despite his levity Dave Cowan knew things. He read books and saw the world. Only the Wilbur twin still had faith in the invigorator. He had seen the picture. You couldn't get round that picture.

Having made the judge uncomfortable, Dave rendered Winona so by a brief lecture upon organic evolution, with the blue jay as his text. He said it had taken four hundred and fifty million years for man to progress thus far from the blue-jay stage—if you could call it progress, the superiority of man's brain to the jay's being still inconsiderable.

Winona was uncomfortable, because she had never been able to persuade herself that we had come up from the animals, and in any event it was not talk for the ears of innocent children. She was relieved when the speaker strayed into the comparatively blameless field of astronomy, telling of suns so vast that our own sun became to them but a pin point of light, and of other worlds out in space peopled with beings like Mrs. Penniman and Winona and the judge, though even here Winona felt that the lecturer was too daring. The Bible said nothing about these other worlds out in space. But then Dave had once, in the post office, argued against

religion itself in the most daring manner, with none other than the Reverend Mallett.

It was not until the meal ended and they were again on the porch in the summer dusk that Winona made any progress in her criminal investigations. There, while Dave Cowan played his guitar and sang sentimental ballads to Mrs. Penniman—these being among the supposed infirmities of the profligate duchess—Winona drew the twins aside and managed to gain a blurred impression of the day's tremendous events. She never did have the thing clearly. The Merle twin was eager to tell too much, the other determined to tell too little. But the affair had plainly been less nefarious than reported by Don Paley to Ed Seaver. The twins persisted in ignoring the social aspects of their adventure. To them it was a thing of pure finance.

Winona had to give it up at last, for Lyman Teaford came with his flute in its black case. Dave Cowan finished "In the Gloaming," brazenly, though it was not thought music by either Lyman or Winona, who would presently dash into the "Poet and Peasant" overture. The twins begged to be let to see Lyman assemble his flute, and Dave overlooked the process with them. Lyman deftly joined the various sections of shining metal.

"He looks like a plumber," said Dave. The twins giggled, but Winona frowned.

"No respect for God or man," mumbled the judge from his wicker chair.

CHAPTER IV

IN THE Penniman home it was not merely Sunday morning; it was Sabbath morning. Throughout the house a subdued bustling, decorous and solemn; a hushed, religious hurry of preparation for church. In the bathroom Judge Penniman shaved his marbled countenance with tender solicitude, fitting himself to adorn a sanctuary. In other rooms Mrs. Penniman and Winona arrayed themselves in choice raiment for behoof of the godly; in each were hurried steppings, as from closet to mirror; shrill whisperings of silken drapery as it fell into place. In the parlour the Merle twin sat reading an instructive book. With unfailing rectitude he had been the first to don Sabbath garments, and now lacked merely his shoes, which were being burnished by his brother in the more informal atmosphere of the woodshed, to which the Sabbath strain of preparation did not penetrate.

It was the Wilbur twin's weekly task to do the shoes of himself and brother and those of the judge. No one could have told precisely why the task fell to him, and he had never thought to question. The thing simply was. Probably Winona, asked to wrestle with the problem, would have urged that Merle was always the first one dressed, and should not be expected to submit his Sunday suit to the hazards of this toil. She would have added, perhaps, that anyway it was more suitable work for Wilbur, the latter being of a rougher spiritual texture. Also, Merle could be trusted to behave himself in the Penniman parlour, not touching the many bibelots there displayed, or disarranging the furniture, while the Wilbur twin would not only touch and disarrange, but pry into and handle and climb and altogether demoralize.

In all the parlour there was but one object for which he had a seemly respect—the vast painting of a recumbent lion behind bars. It was not an ordinary picture, such as may be seen in galleries, for the bars guarding the fierce beast were real bars set into the frame, a splendid conceit that the Wilbur twin never tired of regarding. If you were alone in the sacred room you could go right up to the frame and feel the actual bars and put your hand thrillingly through them to touch the painted king of the jungle. But the Merle twin could sit alone in the presence of this prized art treasure and never think of touching it. He would sit quietly and read his instructive book and not occasion the absent Winona any anxiety. Wherefore the Wilbur twin each Sabbath morning in the woodshed polished three pairs of shoes, and not uncheerfully. He would, in truth, much rather be there at his task than compelled to sit in the parlour with his brother present to tell if he put inquiring fingers into the lion's cage.

He had finished the shoes of his brother and himself, not taking too much pains about the heels, and now laboured at the more considerable footgear of the judge. The judge's shoes were not only broad, but of a surface abounding in hills and valleys. As Dave Cowan said, the judge's feet were lumpy. But the Wilbur twin was conscientious here, and the judge's heels would be as resplendent as the undulating toes. The task had been appreciably delayed by Frank, the dog, who, with a quaint relish for shoe blacking, had licked a superb polish from one shoe while the other was under treatment. His new owner did not rebuke him. He conceived that Frank had intelligently wished to aid in the work, and applauded him even while securing the shined shoes from his further assistance.

But one pagan marred this chastened Sabbath harmony of preparation. In the little house Dave Cowan lolled lordly in a disordered bed, smoked his calabash pipe beside a disordered breakfast tray, fetched him by the Wilbur twin, and luxuriated in the merely Sunday—and not Sabbath—edition

of a city paper shrieking with black headlines and spectacular with coloured pictures; a pleasing record of crimes and disasters and secrets of the boudoir, the festal diversions of the opulent, the minor secrets of astronomy, woman's attire, baseball, high art, and facial creams. As a high priest of the most liberal of all arts, Dave scanned the noisy pages with a cynical and professional eye, knowing that none of the stuff had acquired any dignity or power to coerce human belief until mere typesetters like himself had crystallized it. Not for Dave Cowan was the printed word of sacred authority. He had set up too much copy. But he was pleased, nevertheless, thus to while and doze away a beautiful Sabbath morning that other people made rather a trial of.

Having finished the last of the judge's shoes, the Wilbur twin took them and the shoes of Merle to their owners, then hastened with his own to the little house where he must dress in his own Sunday clothes, wash his hands with due care—they would be doubtingly inspected by Winona—and put soap on his hair to make it lie down. Merle's hair would lie politely as combed, but his own hair owned no master but soap. Lacking this, it stood out and up in wicked disorder—like the hair of a rowdy, Winona said.

The rebellious stuff was at last plastered deceitfully to his skull as if a mere brush had smoothed it, and with a final survey, to assure himself that he had forgotten none of those niceties of the toilet that Winona would insist upon, he took his new straw hat and went again to the Penniman house. For the moment he was in flawless order, as neat, as compactly and accurately accoutred as the Merle twin, to whom this effect came without effort. But it would be so only for a few fleeting moments. He mournfully knew this, and so did Winona. Within five blocks from home and still five blocks from the edifice of worship, while Merle appeared as one born to Sunday clothes and shined shoes and a new hat, the Wilbur twin would be one to whom Sabbath finery was exotic and unwelcome. The flawless lustre of his shoes would be dulled, even though he walked sedately the safe

sidewalk; his broad collar and blue polka-dotted cravat would be awry, one stocking would be down, his jacket yawning, all his magnificence seeming unconquerably alien. Winona did him the justice to recognize that this disarray was due to no wilfulness of its victim. He was helpless against a malign current of his being.

He held himself stiff in the parlour until the Pennimans came rustling down the stairway. He could exult in a long look at the benignant lion back of real bars, but, of course, he could not now reach up to touch the bars. It would do something to his clothes, even if the watchful and upright Merle had not been there to report a transgression of the rules. Merle also stood waiting, his hat nicely in one hand.

The judge descended the stairs, monumental in black frock coat, gray trousers, and the lately polished shoes that were like shining relief maps of a hill country. He carried a lustrous silk hat, which he now paused to make more lustrous, his fingers clutching a sleeve of his coat and pulling it down to make a brush. The hat was the only item of the judge's regal attire of which the Wilbur twin was honestly envious—it was so beautiful, so splendid, so remote. He had never even dared to touch it. He could have been left alone in the room with it, and still would have surveyed it in all respect from a proper distance.

Mrs. Penniman came next, rustling in black silk and under a flowered hat that Winona secretly felt to be quite too girlish. Then Winona from the door of her room above called to the twins, and they ascended the stairway for a last rite before the start for church, the bestowal of perfume upon each. Winona stood in the door of her room, as each Sunday she stood at this crisis, the cut-glass perfume bottle in hand. The twins solemnly approached her, and upon the white handkerchief of each she briefly inverted the bottle. The scent enveloped them delectably as the handkerchiefs were replaced in the upper left pockets, folded corners protruding correctly. As Wilbur turned away Winona swiftly moistened a finger tip in the precious stuff and drew

it across the pale brow of Merle. It was a furtive tribute to his inherent social superiority.

Winona, in her own silk—not black, but hardly less severe—and in a hat less girlish than her mother's, rustled down the stairs after them. Speech was brief and low-toned among the elders, as befitted the high moment. The twins were solemnly silent. Amid the funereal gloom, broken only by a hushed word or two from Winona or her mother, the judge completed his fond stroking of the luminous hat, raised it slowly, and with both hands adjusted it to his pale curls. Then he took up his gold-headed ebony cane and stepped from the dusk of the parlour into the light of day, walking uprightly in the pride of fine raiment and conscious dignity. Mrs. Penniman walked at his side, not unconscious herself of the impressive mien of her consort.

Followed Winona and Merle, the latter bearing her hymn book and at some pains keeping step with his companion. Behind them trailed the Wilbur twin, resolving, as was his weekly rule, to keep himself neat through church and Sunday-school—yet knowing in his heart it could not be done. Already he could feel his hair stiffening as the coating of soap dried upon it. Pretty soon the shining surface would crack and disorder ensue. What was the use? As he walked carefully now he inhaled rich scent from the group—Winona's perfume combining but somehow not blending with a pungent, almost vivid, aroma of moth balls from the judge's frock coat.

They met or passed other family groups, stiffly armoured for the weekly penance to a bewildering puzzle of mortality. Ceremonious greetings were exchanged with these. The day was bright and the world all fair, but there could be no levity, no social small talk, while this grim business was on. They reached the white house of worship, impressive under its heaven-pointing steeple, and passed within its portals, stepping softly to the accompaniment of those silken whisperings, with now and again the high squeak of new boots whose wearers, profaning the stillness, would appear self-

conscious and annoyed, though as if silently protesting that they were blameless.

Thus began an hour of acute mental distress for the Wilbur twin. He sat tightly between Mrs. Penniman and the judge. There was no free movement possible. He couldn't even juggle one foot backward and forward without correction. The nervous energy thus suppressed rushed to all the surface of his body and made his skin tingle maddeningly. He felt each hair on his head as it broke away from the confining soap. Something was inside his collar, and he couldn't reach for it; there was a poignant itching between his shoulder blades, and this could receive no proper treatment. He boiled with dumb, helpless rage, having to fight this wicked unrest. He never doubted its wickedness, and considered himself forever shut out from those rewards that would fall to the righteous who loved church and could sit still there without jiggling or writhing or twisting or scratching.

He was a little diverted from his tortures by the arrival of the Whipples. From the Penniman pew he could glance across to a side pew and observe a line of repeated Whipple noses, upon which for some moments he was enabled to speculate forgetfully. Once—years ago, it seemed to him—he had heard talk of the Whipple nose. This one had the Whipple nose, or that one did not have the Whipple nose; and it had then been his understanding that the Whipple family possessed but one nose in common; sometimes one Whipple had it; then another Whipple would have it. At the time this had seemed curious, but in no way anomalous. He had readily pictured a Whipple nose being worn now by one and now by another of this family. He had visualized it as something that could be handed about. Later had come the disappointing realization that each Whipple had a complete nose at all times for his very own; that the phrase by which he had been misled denoted merely the possession of a certain build of nose by Whipples.

But even this simple phenomenon offered some distraction from his present miseries. He could glance along the line

of Whipple noses and observe that they were, indeed, of a markedly similar pattern. It was, as one might say, a standardized nose, raised by careful selection through past generations of Whipples to the highest point of efficiency; for ages yet to come the demands of environment, howsoever capricious, would probably dictate no change in its structural details. It sufficed. It was, moreover, a nose of good lines, according to conventional canons. It was shapely, and from its high bridge jutted forward with rather a noble sweep of line to the thin, curved nostrils The high bridge was perhaps the detail that distinguished it from most good noses. It seemed to begin to be a nose almost from the base of the brow. In a world of all Whipple noses this family would have been remarked for its beauty. In one of less than Whipple noses—with other less claimant designs widely popularized—it might be said that the Whipple face would be noted rather for distinction than beauty.

In oblique profile the Wilbur twin could glance across the fronts in turn of Harvey D. Whipple, of Gideon Whipple, his father; of Sharon Whipple, his uncle; and of Juliana Whipple, sole offspring of Sharon. The noses were alike. One had but to look at Miss Juliana to know that in simple justice this should have been otherwise. She might have kept a Whipple nose—Whipple in all essentials—without too pressing an insistence upon bulk. But it had not been so. Her nose was as utterly Whipple as any. They might have been interchanged without detection.

The Wilbur twin stared and speculated upon and mildly enjoyed this display, until a species of hypnotism overtook him, a mercifully deadening inertia that made him slumberous and almost happy. He could keep still at last, and be free from the correcting hand of Mrs. Penniman or the warning prod of the judge's elbow. He dozed in a smother of applied godliness He was delighted presently to note with an awakening start that the sermon was well under way. He heard no word of this. He knew only that a frowning old gentleman stood in a high place and scolded about some-

thing. The Wilbur twin had no notion what his grievance might be; was sensible only of his heated aspect, his activity in gesture, and the rhythm of his phrases.

This influence again benumbed him to forgetfulness, so that during the final prayer he was dramatizing a scene in which three large and savage dogs leaped upon Frank and Frank destroyed them—ate them up. And when he stood at last for the doxology one of his feet had veritably gone to sleep, the one that had been cramped back under the seat, so that he stumbled and drew unwelcome attention to himself while the foot tingled to wakefulness.

The ever-tractable Merle had been attentive to the sermon, had sung beautifully, and was still immaculate of garb, while the Wilbur twin emerged from the ordeal in rank disorder, seeming to have survived a scuffle in which efforts had been made to wrench away his Sunday clothes and to choke him with his collar and cravat. And the coating of soap had played his hair false. It stood out behind and stood up in front, not with any system, but merely here and there.

"You are a perfect sight," muttered Winona to him. "I don't see how you do it." But neither did the offender.

With a graciously relaxed tension the freed congregation made a leisurely progress to the doors of the church; many lingered here in groups for greetings and light exchanges. It was here that the Penniman group coalesced with the Whipple group, a circumstance that the trailing Wilbur noted with alarm. The families did not commonly affiliate, and the circumstance boded ominously. It could surely not be without purpose. The Wilbur twin's alarm was that the Whipple family had regretted its prodigality of the day before and was about to demand its money back. He lurked in the shadowy doorway.

The Whipples were surrounding Merle with every sign of interest. They shook hands with him. They seemed to appraise him as if he were something choice on exhibition at a fair. Harvey D. was showing the most interest, bending above the exhibit in apparently light converse. But the

Wilbur twin knew all about Harvey D. He was the banker and wore a beard. He was to be seen on week days as one passed the First National Bank, looking out through slender bars—exactly as the Penniman lion did—upon a world that wanted money, but couldn't have it without some good reason. He had not been present when the Whipple money was so thoughtlessly loosened, and he would be just the man to make a fuss about it now. He would want to take it back and put it behind those bars in the bank where no one could get it. But he couldn't ever have it back, because it was spent. Still, he might do something with the spender.

The Wilbur twin slunk farther into friendly shadows, and not until the groups separated and the four Whipples were in their waiting carriage did he venture into the revealing sunlight. But no one paid him any attention. The judge and Mrs. Penniman walked up the shaded street, for the Sunday dinner must be prepared. Winona and the Merle twin, both flushed from the recent social episode, turned back to the church to meet and ignore him.

"Fortune knocks once at every one's door," Winona was mysteriously saying.

The Wilbur twin knew this well enough. The day before it had knocked at his door and found him in.

There was still Sunday-school to be endured, but he did not regard this as altogether odious. It was not so smothering. The atmosphere was less strained. One's personality could come a bit to the front without incurring penalties, and one met one's own kind on a social plane—subject to discipline, it was true, but still mildly enjoyable. It was his custom to linger here until the classes gathered, but to-day the Whipple pony cart was driven up by the Whipple stepmother and the girl with her hair cut off. Apparently no one made these two go to church, but they had come to Sunday-school. And the Wilbur twin fled within at sight of them. The pony cart, vehicle in which he had been made a public mock, was now a sickening sight to him.

Sunday-school was even less of a trial to him than usual.

The twins were in the class of Winona, and Winona taught her class to-day with unwonted unction; but the Wilbur twin was pestered with few questions about the lesson. She rather singled Merle out and made him an instructive example to the rest of the class, asking Wilbur but twice, and then in sheerly perfunctory routine: "And what great lesson should we learn from this?"

Neither time did he know what great lesson we should learn from this, and stammered his ignorance pitiably, but Winona, in the throes of some mysterious prepossession, forgot to reprove him, and merely allowed the more gifted Merle to purvey the desired information. So the Wilbur twin was practically free to wriggle on his hard chair, to exchange noiseless greetings with acquaintances in other classes, and to watch Lyman Teaford, the superintendent, draw a pleasing cartoon of the lesson with coloured chalk on a blackboard, consisting chiefly of a rising yellow sun with red rays, which was the sun of divine forgiveness Once the Wilbur twin caught the eye of the Whipple girl—whose bonnet hid her cropped hair—and she surprisingly winked at him. He did not wink back. Even to his liberal mind, it did not seem right to wink in a Sunday-school.

When at last they all sang "Bringing in the Sheaves," and were ably dismissed by Lyman Teaford, who could be as solemn here as he was gay in a parlour with his flute, Winona took the Merle twin across the room to greet the Whipple stepmother and the Whipple girl. Wilbur regarded the scene from afar. Winona seemed to be showing off the Merle twin, causing him to display all his perfect manners, including a bow lately acquired.

The Wilbur twin felt no slight in this. He was glad enough to be left out of Winona's manœuvres, for he saw that they were manœuvres and that Winona was acting from some large purpose. Unless it wanted its money back, the Whipple family had no meaning for him; it was merely people with the Whipple nose, though, of course, the stepmother did not have this. He paused only to wonder if the girl

would have it when she grew up—she now boasted but the rudiments of any nose whatsoever—and dismissed the tribe from his mind.

He waited for Winona and Merle a block up the street from the church. Winona was silent with importance, preoccupied, grave, and yet uplifted. Not until they reached the Penniman gate did she issue from this abstraction to ask the Wilbur twin rather severely what lesson he had learned from the morning sermon. The Wilbur twin, with immense difficulty, brought her to believe that he had not heard a word of the sermon. This was especially incredible, because it had dealt with the parable of the prodigal son who spent all his substance in riotous living. One would have thought, said Winona, that this lesson would have come home to one who had so lately followed the same bad course, and she sought now to enlighten the offender.

"And he had to eat with the pigs when his money was all gone," Merle submitted in an effort to aid Winona.

But the Wilbur twin's perverse mind merely ran to the picture of fatted calf, though without relish—he did not like fat meat.

It was good to be back in a human atmosphere once more, where he could hear his father's quips. The Penniman Sunday dinner was based notably on chicken, as were all other Sunday dinners in Newbern, and his father, when he entered the house, was already beginning the gayety by pledging Mrs. Penniman in a wineglass of the Ajax Invigorator. He called it ruby liquor and said that, taken in moderation, it would harm no one, though he estimated that as few as three glasses would cause people to climb trees like a monkey.

The Wilbur twin was puzzled by this and would have preferred that his present be devoted solely to making a new man of Judge Penniman, but he laughed loyally with his father, and rejoiced when Mrs. Penniman, in the character of the abandoned duchess, put her own lips to the glass at his father's urging. The judge did not enter into this spirit of foolery, resenting, indeed, that a sound medicinal compound

should be thus impugned. And Winona was even more severe. Not for her to-day were jests about Madame la Marquise and her heart of adamant. Dave Cowan tried a few of these without result.

Winona was still silent with importance, or spoke cryptically, and she lavished upon the Merle twin such attention as she could give from her own mysterious calculations. One might have gathered that she was beholding the Merle twin in some high new light. The Wilbur twin ate silently and as unobtrusively as he could, for table manners were especially watched by Winona on Sunday. Not until the blackberry pie did he break into speech, and even then, it appeared, not with the utmost felicity. His information that these here blackberries had been picked off the grave of some old Jonas Whipple up in the burying ground caused him to be regarded coldly by more than one of those about the table; and Winona wished to be told how many times she had asked him not to say "these here." Of course he couldn't tell her.

Dinner over, it appeared that Winona would take Merle with her to call upon poor old Mrs. Dodwell, who had been bedridden for twenty years, but was so patient with it all. She loved to have Merle sit by her bedside of a Sunday and tell of the morning's sermon. They would also take her a custard. The Wilbur twin was not invited upon this excursion, but his father winked at him when it was mentioned and he was happy. He could in no manner have edified the afflicted Mrs. Dodwell, and the wink meant that he would go with his father for a walk over the hills—perhaps to the gypsy camp. So he winked back at his father, being no longer in Sunday-school, and was impatient to be off.

In the little house he watched from a window until Winona and Merle had gone on their errand of mercy—Merle carrying nicely the bowl of custard swathed in a napkin—and thereupon heartily divested himself of shoes and stockings. Winona, for some reason she could never make apparent to him, believed that boys could not decently go barefoot on the Lord's Day. He did not wish to affront her, but neither

would he wear shoes and stockings with no one to make him. His bare feet rejoiced at the cool touch of the grass as he waited in the front yard for his father. He would have liked to change his Sunday clothes for the old ones of a better feel, but this even he felt would be going too far. You had to draw the line somewhere.

His father came out, lighting his calabash pipe. He wore a tweed cap now in place of the formal derby, but he was otherwise attired as on the previous evening, in the blue coat and vivid waistcoat, the inferior trousers, and the undesirable shoes. As they went down the street under shading elms the dog, Frank, capered at the end of his taut leash.

They went up Fair Street to reach the wooded hills beyond the town. The street was still and vacant. The neat white houses with green blinds set back in their flowered yards would be at this hour sheltering people who had eaten heavily of chicken for dinner and now dozed away its benign effects. Even song birds had stilled their pipings, and made but brief flights through the sultry air.

Dave Cowan sauntered through the silence in a glow of genial tolerance for the small town, for Dave knew cities. In Newbern he was but a merry transient; indeed, in all those strange cities he went off to he was but a transient. So frequent his flittings, none could claim him for its own. He had the air of being in the world itself, but a transient, a cheerful and observant explorer finding entertainment in the manners and customs of a curious tribe, its foibles, conceits, and quaint standards of value—since the most of them curiously adhered to one spot even though the round earth invited them to wander.

Sometimes Dave lingered in Newbern—to the benefit of the *Weekly Advance*—for as long as three months. Sometimes he declared he would stay but a day and stayed long; sometimes he declared he would stay a long time and stayed but a day. He was a creature happily pliant to the rule of all his whims. He never bothered to know why he dropped into Newbern, nor bothered to know why he left. On some

morning like other mornings, without plan, he would know he was going and go, stirred by some vagrant longing for a strange city—and it was so easy to go. He was unencumbered with belongings. He had no troublesome packing to do, and took not even the smallest of bags in his farings forth. Unlike the twins, Dave had no Sunday clothes. What clothes he had he wore, very sensibly, it seemed to him. He had but to go on and on, equipped with his union card and his printer's steel rule, the sole machinery of his trade, and where he would linger he was welcome, for as long as he chose and at a wage ample for his few needs, to embalm the doings of a queer world in type. Little wonder he should always obey the wander-bidding.

They passed a place where the head of the clan, having dined, had been overtaken with lethargy and in a hammock on his porch was asleep in a public and noisy manner.

"Small-town stuff!" murmured Dave, amiably contemptuous.

The Wilbur twin could never understand why his father called Newbern a small town. They came to the end of Fair Street, where the white houses dwindled into open country. The road led away from the river and climbed the gentle slope of West Hill. The Wilbur twin had climbed that slope the day before under auspices that he now recalled with disgust. Beyond, at the top of the hill, its chimneys lifted above the trees and its red walls showing warmly through the cool green of its shading foliage, was the Whipple New Place. To the left, across the western end of the little town and capping another hill, was the Whipple Old Place, where dwelt Sharon Whipple and his daughter, Juliana. The walls of the Whipple Old Place were more weathered, of a duller red. The two places looked down upon the town quite as castles of old looked down upon their feudatories.

"I was right inside that house yesterday," said the Wilbur twin, pointing to the Whipple New Place and boasting a little—he would not have to reveal the dreadful details of his entry. "Right inside of it," he added to make sure

that his father would get all his importance. But the father seemed not enough impressed.

"You'll probably go into better houses than that some day," he merely said, and added: "You learn a good trade like mine and you can always go anywhere; always make your good money and be more independent than Whipples or even kings in their palaces. Remember that, Sputterboy."

"Yes, sir," said Wilbur.

His father never addressed the Merle twin by any but his rightful name, nor did he ever address the other by the one the dead mother had affixed to him, miscalling him by a number of titles, among which were Sputterboy, Gig, Doctor, and Bill.

Before ascending quite to the Whipple New Place they left the dusty road for a path that led over a lawnlike stretch of upland, starred with buttercups and tiny anemones, and inhabited by a colony of gophers that instantly engaged Frank, the dog, now free of his leash, in futile dashes. They stood erect, with languidly drooped paws, until he was too near; then they were inexplicably not there. Frank at length divined that they unfairly achieved these disappearances by descending into caverns beneath the surface of the earth. At first, with frantic claws and eager squeals, he tore at the entrances to these until the prey appeared at exits farther on, only to repeat the disappearance when dashed at. Frank presently saw the chase to be hopeless. It was no good digging for something that wouldn't be there.

"There's life for you, Doctor," said Dave Cowan. "Life has to live on life, humans same as dogs. Life is something that keeps tearing itself down and building itself up again; everybody killing something else and eating it. Do you understand that?"

"Yes, sir," said Wilbur, believing he did. Dogs killed gophers if they caught them, and human beings killed chickens for Sunday dinners.

"Humans are the best killers of all," said Dave. "That's

the reason they came up from monkeys, and got civilized so they wear neckties and have religion and post offices and all such."

"Yes, sir," said Wilbur.

They climbed to a green height and reclined on the cool sward in the shade of a beech tree. Here they could pick out the winding of the quick little river between its green banks far below, and look across the roofs of slumbrous Newbern. The Wilbur twin could almost pick out the Penniman house. Then he looked up, and low in the sky he surprisingly beheld the moon, an orb of pale bronze dulled from its night shine. Never before had he seen the moon by day. He had supposed it was in the sky only at night. So his father lectured now on astronomy and the cosmos. It seemed that the moon was always there, or about there, a lonesome old thing, because there was no life on it. Dave spoke learnedly, for his Sunday paper had devoted a page to something of this sort.

"Everything is electricity or something," said Dave, "and it crackles and works on itself until it makes star dust, and it shakes this together till it makes lumps, and they float round, and pretty soon they're big lumps like the moon and like this little ball of star dust we're riding on—and there are millions of them out there all round and about, some a million times bigger than this little one, and they all whirl and whirl, the little ones whirling round the big ones and the big ones whirling round still bigger ones, dancing and swinging and going off to some place that no one knows anything about; and some are old and have lost their people; and some are too young to have any people yet; but millions like this one have people, and on some they are a million years older than we are, and know everything that it'll take us a million years to find out; but even they haven't begun to really know anything—compared with what they don't know. They'll have to go on forever finding out things about what it all means. Do you understand that, Bill?"

"Yes, sir," said Wilbur.

"Do you understand how people like us get on these whirling lumps?"

"Yes, sir," said Wilbur.

"How do they?"

"No, sir," said Wilbur.

"Well, it's simple enough. This star dust shakes together, and pretty soon some of it gets to be one chemical and some of it gets to be another, like water and salt and lime and phosphorus and stuff like that, and it gets together in little combinations and it makes little animals, so little you couldn't see them, and they get together and make bigger animals, and pretty soon they have brains and stomachs—and there you are. This electricity or something that shook the star dust together and made the chemicals, and shook the chemicals together and made the animals—well, it's fierce stuff. It wants to find out all about itself. It keeps making animals with bigger brains all the time, so it can examine itself and write books about itself—but the animals have to be good killers, or something else kills them. This electricity that makes 'em don't care which kills which. It knows the best killer will have the best brain in the long run; that's all it cares about. It's a good sporty scheme, all right. Do you understand that, Doctor?"

"Yes, sir," said Wilbur.

"Everything's got a fair chance to kill; this power shows no favours to anything. If gophers could kill dogs it would rather have gophers; when microbes kill us it will rather have microbes than people. It just wants a winner and don't care a snap which it is."

"Yes, sir."

"Of course, now, you hear human people swell and brag and strut round about how they are different from the animals and have something they call a soul that the animals haven't got, but that's just the natural conceit of this electricity or something before it has found out much about itself. Not different from the animals, you ain't. This tree I'm

leaning against is your second or third cousin. Only difference, you can walk and talk and see. Understand?"

"Yes, sir," said Wilbur, "Couldn't we go up to the gypsy camp now?"

Dave refilled the calabash pipe, lighted it, and held the match while it burned out.

"That fire came from the sun," he said. "We're only burning matches ourselves—burning with a little fire from the sun. Pretty soon it flickers out."

"It's just over this next hill, and they got circus wagons and a fire where they cook their dinners, right outdoors, and fighting roosters, and tell your fortune."

Dave rose.

"Of course I don't say I know it all yet. There's a catch in it I haven't figured out. But I'm right as far as I've gone. You can't go wrong if you take the facts and stay by 'em and don't read books that leave the facts to one side, like most books do."

"Yes, sir," said Wilbur, "and they sleep inside their wagons and I wish we had a wagon like that and drove round the country and lived in it."

"All right," said his father. "Stir your stumps."

They followed the path that led up over another little hill winding through clumps of hazel brush and a sparse growth of oak and beech. From the summit of this they could see the gypsy camp below them, in an open glade by the roadside. It was as the Wilbur twin had said: there were gayly-painted wagons—houses on wheels—and a campfire and tethered horses and the lolling gypsies themselves. About the outskirts loafed a dozen or so of the less socially eligible of Newbern. Above a fire at the camp centre a kettle simmered on its pothook, being stirred at this moment by a brown and aged crone in frivolous-patterned calico, who wore gold hoops in her ears and bangles at her neck and bracelets of silver on her arms—bejewelled, indeed, most unbecomingly for a person of her years.

The Wilbur twin would have lingered on the edge of the

glade with other local visitors, a mere silent observer of this delightful life; he had not dreamed of being accepted as a social equal by such exalted beings. But his father stalked boldly through the outer ring of spectators to the camp's centre and genially hailed the aged woman, who, on first looking up from her cookery, held out a withered palm for the silver that should buy him secrets of his future.

But Dave Cowan merely preened his beautiful yellow moustache at her and said, "How's business, Mother?" Whereupon she saw that Dave was not a villager to be wheedled by her patter. She recognized him, indeed, as belonging like herself to the freemasonry of them that know men and cities, and she spoke to him as one human to another.

"Business been pretty rotten here," she said as she stirred the kettle's contents. "Oh, we made two-three pretty good horse trades—nothing much. We go on to a bigger town to-morrow."

A male gypsy in corduroy trousers and scarlet sash and calico shirt open on his brown throat came to the fire now, and the Wilbur twin admiringly noted that his father greeted this rare being, too, as an equal. The gypsy held beneath an arm a trim young gamecock feathered in rich browns and reds, with a hint of black, and armed with needle-pointed spurs. He stroked the neck of the bird and sat on his haunches with Dave before the fire to discuss affairs of the road; for he, too, divined at a glance that Dave was here but a gypsy transient, even though he spoke a different lingo.

The Wilbur twin sat also on his haunches before the fire, and thrilled with pride as his father spoke easily of distant strange cities that the gypsies also knew; cities of the North where summer found them, and cities of the South to which they fared in winter. He had always been proud of his father, but never so proud as now, when he sat there talking to real gypsies as if they were no greater than any one. He was quite ashamed when the gypsies' dog, a gaunt, hungry-looking beast, narrowly escaped being eaten up by his own

dog. But Frank, at the sheer verge of a deplorable offense, implicitly obeyed his master's command and forbore to destroy the gypsy mongrel. Again he flopped to his back at the interested approach of the other dog, held four limp paws aloft, and simpered at the stranger.

Other gypsies, male and female, came to the group about the fire, and lively chatter ensued, a continuous flashing of white teeth and shaking of golden ear hoops and rattling of silver bracelets. The Wilbur twin fondly noted that his father knew every city the gypsies knew, and even told them the advantages of some to which they had not penetrated. He gathered this much of the talk, though much was beyond him. He kept close to his father's side when the latter took his leave of these new friends. He wanted these people to realize that he belonged to the important strange gentleman who had for a moment come so knowingly among them.

As they climbed out of the sheltering glade he was alive with a new design. Gypsies notoriously carried off desirable children; this was common knowledge in Newbern Center. So why wouldn't they carry off him, especially if he were right round there where they could find him easily? He saw himself and his dog forcibly conveyed away with the caravan—though he would not really resist—to a strange and charming life beyond the very farthest hills. He did not confide this to his father, but he looked back often. They followed a path and were soon on a bare ridge above the camp.

Dave Cowan was already talking of other things, seeming not to have been ever so little impressed with his reception by these wondrous people, but he had won a new measure of his son's respect. Wilbur would have lingered here where they could still observe through the lower trees the group about the campfire, but Dave Cowan seemed to have had enough of gypsies for the moment, and sauntered on up the ridge, across an alder swale and out on a parklike space to rest against a fence that bounded a pasture belonging to the

Whipple New Place. Across this pasture, in which the fat sorrel pony grazed and from which it regarded them from time to time, there was another grove of beech and walnut and hickory, and beyond this dimly loomed the red bulk of the Whipple house and outbuildings. There was a stile through the fence at the point where they reached it, and Dave Cowan idly lolled by this while the Wilbur twin sprawled in the scented grass at his feet. He well knew he should not be on the ground in his Sunday clothes. On the other hand, if the gypsies stole him they would not be so fussy as Winona about his clothes. None of them seemed to have Sunday clothes.

He again broached the suggestion about a gypsy wagon for himself and his father—and Frank, the dog—in which they could go far away, seeing all those strange cities and cooking their dinner over campfires. His father seemed to consider this not wholly impracticable, but there were certain disadvantages of the life, and there were really better ways. It seems you could be a gypsy in all essentials, and still live in houses like less adventurous people.

"Trouble with them, they got no trade," said the wise Dave, "and out in all kinds of weather, and small-town constables telling them to move on, and all such. You learn a good loose trade, then you can go where you want to." A loose trade seemed to be one that you could work at any place; they always wanted you if you knew a loose trade like the printer's—or, "Now you take barbering," said Dave. "There's a good loose trade. A barber never has to look for work; he can go into any new town and always find his job. I don't know but what I'd just as soon be a barber as a printer. Some ways I might like it better. You don't have as much time to yourself, of course, but you meet a lot of men you wouldn't meet otherwise; most of 'em fools to be sure, but some of 'em wise that you can get new thoughts from. It's a cleaner trade than typesetting and fussing round a small-town print shop. Maybe you'll learn to be a good barber; then you can have just as good a time as those

gypsies, going about from time to time and seeing the world."

"Yes, sir," said the Wilbur twin, "and cutting people's hair with clippers like Don Paley clipped mine with."

"New York, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Omaha, Kansas City, Denver, San Antone," murmured Dave, and there was unction in his tone as he recited these advantages of a loose trade—"any place you like the looks of, or places you've read about that sound good—just going along with your little kit of razors, and not having to small-town it except when you want a bit of quiet."

They heard voices back of them. Dave turned about and Wilbur rose from the grass. Across the pasture came the girl, Patricia Whipple, followed at a little distance by Juliana. The latter was no longer in church garb, but in a gray tweed skirt, white blouse, and a soft straw hat with a flopping brim. There was a black ribbon about the hat and her stout shoes were of tan leather. The girl was bareheaded, and Don Paley's repair of yesterday's damage was noticeable. She came at a quickening pace, while Juliana followed slowly. Juliana looked severe and formidable. Never had her nose looked more the Whipple nose then when she observed Dave Cowan and his son at the stile. Yet she smiled humorously when she recognized the boy, and allowed the humour to reach his father when she glanced at him. Dave and Miss Juliana had never been formally presented. Dave had seen Juliana, but Juliana had had until this moment no sight of Dave, for though there was in Newbern no social prejudice against a craftsman, and Dave might have moved in its highest circles, he had chosen to consort with the frankly ineligible. He lifted his cap in a flourishing salute as Juliana and Patricia came through the stile.

"And how are you to-day, my young friend?" asked Juliana of Wilbur in her calm, deep voice.

The Wilbur twin said, "Very well, I thank you," striving instinctively to make his own voice as deep as Juliana's.

The girl winked at him brazenly as they passed on.

"Gypsies!" she called, exultantly, and Juliana swept him with a tolerant smile.

Dave Cowan watched them along the path to the ridge above the camp. Here they paused in most intelligible pantomime. Patricia Whipple wished to descend to the very heart of the camp, while Juliana could be seen informing the child that they were near enough. To make this definite she sat upon the bole of a felled oak beside the path while Patricia jiggled up and down in eloquent objection to the untimely halt. Dave read the scene and caressed his thick moustache with practiced thumb and finger. His glance was sympathetic.

"The poor old maid!" he murmured. "All that Whipple money, and she has to be just a small-towner! Say, I bet no one has ever kissed that old girl since her mother died! None of these small-town hicks would ever have the nerve to. Yes, sir; any one's got a right to be sorry for that dame. If she had a little enterprise she'd branch out from here and meet a few people."

"Yes, sir," said Wilbur. "But that girl wants to go down to the camp."

This was plain. Patricia still danced, while Juliana remained firmly seated.

"I could go take her down," he continued.

"Why don't you?" said his father, again stroking the golden moustache in sympathy for the unconscious Juliana.

So it befell that the Wilbur twin shyly approached the group by the felled tree, and the watching father saw the two children, after a moment's hesitancy on the part of Juliana, disappear from view over the crest of the ridge. Dave continued to loll by the stile and to watch the waiting Juliana, thinking of gypsies and the pure joy of wandering. He began to repeat some verses he had lately happened upon, murmuring them to a little mass of white clouds far off against the blue of the summer sky, where the pale bronze moon lonesomely hung. He liked the words and the moon and gypsies

joyously foot-loose, and he again grew sympathetic for Juliana's small-town plight. He felt a large pagan tolerance for those warped souls pent in small towns.

After twenty minutes of this he faintly heard a call from Juliana, sent after the children below her. He saw her stand to beckon commandingly and watch to see if she were obeyed. Then she turned and came slowly back up the path that would lead to the stile. Again Dave absently murmured his verses. Juliana approached the stile, walking briskly now. She was halted by surprising speech from this rather cheaply debonair creature who looked so nearly like a gentleman and yet so plainly was not.

"Wanted to be off with 'em, didn't you?" Dave was saying brightly; "off and over the edge of the world, all foot-loose and free as wind, going over strange roads and lying by night under the stars."

"What?" demanded Juliana sharply.

She studied the fellow's face for the first time. He was preening his yellow moustache and flashing a challenge to her from half-shut eyes.

"Small-towners bound to feel it," he continued, unconscious of any sharpness in Juliana's "What!" "They want to be off and over the edge of things, but they don't dare—haven't the nerve. You'd like to, but you don't dare. You know you don't!"

Juliana almost smiled. The fellow's face, as she paused beside him at the stile, was set with sheer impudence, yet this was not wholly unattractive. And amazingly he now broke into verse:

We, too, shall steal upon the spring
With amber sails flown wide;
Shall drop, some day, behind the moon,
Borne on a star-blue tide.

He indicated the present moon with flourishing grace as he named it. Juliana did not gasp, but it might have been a

gasp in one less than a Whipple. But the troubadour was not to be daunted. Juliana didn't know Dave Cowan as cities knew him.

Enchanted ports we, too, shall touch;
Cadiz or Cameroon;
Nor other pilot need beside
A magic wisp of moon.

Again he gracefully indicated our lunar satellite, and again Juliana nearly gasped.

"Of course, you felt it all, watching those people. I don't blame you for feeling wild."

Juliana lifted one of her stout tan boots toward the stile, and Dave with doffed cap extended a hand to assist her through. Juliana, dazed beyond a Whipple calm for almost the first time in her thirty years, found her own hand perforce upon his.

"You poor thing!" concluded Dave with a swift glance to the ridge where the children had not yet appeared.

Then amazingly he enfolded the figure of the woman in his arms and upon her cold, appalled lips he imprinted a swift but accurate kiss.

"There, poor thing!" he murmured.

He lavished one look upon the still frozen Juliana, replaced the cap upon his yellow hair, once more preened his moustache at her, and turned away to meet the oncoming children. And in his glance Juliana retained still the wit to read a gay, cherishing pity. As he turned away she sank limply against the fence, her first sensation being all of wonder that she had not cried out at this monstrous assault. And very clearly she knew at once that she had not cried out or made any protest because, though monstrous, it was even more absurd. A seasoned sense of humour had not failed.

The guilty man swaggered on to meet the children, not looking back. For him the incident was closed. Juliana, a hand supporting her capable chin, steadily regarded his

swaying shoulders and the yellow hair beneath his cap. In her nostrils was the scent of printer's ink and pipe tobacco. She reflectively rubbed her chin, for it had been stung with a day-old beard that pricked like a nettle. Now she was recalling another woodland adventure of a dozen years before here in this same forest.

Dave Cowan had been wrong when he said that no one had kissed her since her mother died. Once on a winter's day, when she was sixteen, she had crossed here, bundled in a red cloak and hood, and a woodchopper, a merry, laughing foreigner who spoke no English, had hailed her gayly, and she had stopped and gayly tried to understand him, and knew only that he was telling her she was beautiful. She at least had thought it was that, and was certain of it when he had seized and kissed her, laughing joyously the while. She had not told any one of that, but she had never forgotten. And now this curious creature, whom she had not supposed to be gallantly inclined—unshaven, smelling of printer's ink and tobacco!

"I'm coming on!" said Juliana aloud, and laughed rather grimly.

She watched her prankling blade meet the children and go off down the ridge with his son, still not looking back. She thought it queer he did not look back at her just once. She soothed her chin again, sniffing the air.

Patricia Whipple came leaping up the path, excited with an imminent question. She halted before the still-reflective Juliana and went at once to the root of her matter.

"Cousin Juliana, what did that funny man kiss you for?"

This time Juliana in truth did gasp. There was no suppressing it.

"Patricia Whipple—and did that boy see it, too?"

"No, he was too far behind me. But I did. I saw it. I was looking right at you, and that funny man—all at once he grabbed you round your waist and he——"

"Patricia, dear, listen! We must promise never to say

anything about it—never to anybody in the world—won't we, dear?"

"Oh, I won't tell if you don't want me to, but what——"

"You promise me—never to tell a soul!"

"Of course! I promise—cross my heart and hope to die—but what did he do it for?"

Juliana tried humorous evasion.

"Men, my dear, are often tempted by women to such lengths—tempted beyond their strength. Your question isn't worded with all the tact in the world. Is it so strange that a man should want to kiss me?"

"Well, I don't know"—Patricia became judicial, scanning the now flushed countenance of Juliana—"I don't see why not. But what did he do it for?"

"My dear, you'll be honest with me, and never tell; so I'll be honest with you. I don't know—I really don't know. But I have an awful suspicion that the creature meant to be kind to me."

"He looks like a kind man. And he's the father of the boy that I wore his clothes yesterday when I was running away, and the father of that other boy that was with him and that I'm going to have one of for my very own brother, because Harvey D. and grandpa said something of that kind would have to be done, so what relation will that make us to this man that was so kind to you?"

"None whatever," said Juliana, shortly. "And never forget your promise not to tell. Come, we must go back."

They went on through the pasture. The shadows had lengthened and the moon already glowed a warmer bronze. Juliana glanced at it and murmured indistinctly.

"What is it?" asked Patricia.

"Nothing," said Juliana. But she had been asking herself: "I wonder where he gets his verses?"

Her hand went again to her chin.

CHAPTER V

DAVE COWAN went down the ridge to the road, disregarding his gypsy friends. He trod the earth with a ruffling bravado. The Wilbur twin lingered as far behind as he dared, loitering provocatively in the sight of the child stealers. If they meant to do anything about it now was their chance. But no violence was offered him, and presently, far beyond the camp where the fire still burned, he was forced to conclude that they could not mean to carry him off. Certainly they were neglecting a prize who had persistently flaunted himself at them. They notably lacked enterprise.

Down over the grassy slope of West Hill they went, the boy still well in the rear; you never could tell what might happen; and so came to Fair Street across shadows that lay long to the east. Newbern was still slumberous. Smoke issued from a chimney here and there, but mostly the town would partake of a cold supper. The boy came beside his father, with Frank, the dog, again on his leash of frayed rope. Dave Cowan was reciting to himself:

Enchanted ports we, too, shall touch;
Cadiz or Cameroon——

Then he became conscious of the silent boy at his side, stepping noiselessly with bare feet.

"Life is funny," said Dave.

"Yes, sir," said Wilbur.

"Of course there's a catch in it somewhere."

"Yes, sir."

"That old girl back there, that old maid, she'll have to small-town it all her life. I feel sorry for her, I do."

"Yes, sir."

But the sorrowing father now began to whistle cheerfully. His grief had not overborne him. A man who would call Judge Penniman Old Flapdoodle and question the worth of Matthew Arnold's acquaintance was not to be long downcast at the plight of one woman. And he had done what man could for her.

They came to River Street, the street of shops, deserted and sleeping back of drawn curtains. Only the shop of Solly Gumble seemed to be open for trade. This was but seeming, however, for another establishment near by, though sealed and curtained as to front, suffered its rear portal to yawn most hospitably. This was the place of business of Herman Vielhaber, and its street sign concisely said, "Lager Bier Saloon."

Dave Cowan turned into the alley just beyond Solly Gumble's, then up another alley that led back of the closed shops, and so came to the back door of this refectory. It stood open, and from the cool and shadowy interior came a sourish smell of malt liquors and the hum of voices. They entered and were in Herman Vielhaber's pleasant back room, with sanded floor and a few round tables, at which sat half a dozen men consuming beer from stone mugs or the pale wine of Herman's country from tall glasses.

Herman was a law-abiding citizen. Out of deference to a sacred and long-established American custom he sealed the front of his saloon on the Sabbath; out of deference to another American custom, equally long established, equally sacred, he received his Sabbath clientèle at the rear—except for a brief morning interval when he and Minna, his wife, attended service at the Lutheran church. Herman's perhaps not too subtle mind had never solved this problem of American morals—why his beverages should be seemly to drink on all days of the week, yet on one of them seemly but if taken behind shut doors and shielding curtains. But he adhered conscientiously to the American rule. His Lutheran pastor had once, in an effort to clear up the puzzle,

explained to him that the Continental Sunday would never do at all in this land of his choice; but it left Herman still muddled, because fixed unalterably in his mind was a conviction that the Continental Sunday was the best of all Sundays. Nor was there anything the least clandestine in this back-door trade of Herman's on the Sabbath. One had but to know the path to his door, and at this moment Newbern's mayor, old Doctor Purdy, sat at one of Herman's tables and sipped from a stone mug of beer and played a game of pinochle with stout, red-bearded Herman himself, overlooked by Minna, who had brought them their drink.

This was another thing about Herman's place that Newbern understood in time. When he had begun business some dozen years before, and it was known that Minna came downstairs from their living rooms above the saloon and helped to serve his patrons, the scandal was high. It was supposed that only a woman without character could, for any purpose whatever, enter a saloon. But Herman had made it plain that into the sort of saloon he conducted any woman, however exalted, could freely enter. If they chose not to, that was their affair. And Minna had in time recovered a reputation so nearly lost at first news of her service here.

Herman, indeed, ran a place of distinction, or at least of tone. He did sell the stronger drinks, it is true, but he sold them judiciously, and much preferred to sell the milder ones. He knew his patrons, and would stubbornly not sell drink, even beer or wine, to one he suspected of abusing the stuff. As for rowdyism, it was known far and wide about Newbern that if you wanted to get thrown out of Herman's quick you had only to start some rough stuff, or even talk raw. It was said he juggled you out the door like you were an empty beer keg. Down by the riverside was another saloon for that sort of thing, kept by Pegleg McCarron, who would sell whisky to any one that could buy, liked rough stuff and with his crutch would participate in it.

When Herman decided that a customer was spending too much money for drink, that customer had to go to Pegleg's

if he bought more. And now the mayor at the little table connived at a flagrant breach of the law he had sworn to uphold, quaffing beer from his mug and melding a hundred aces as casually as if it were a week-day.

The other men at the little tables were also of the substantial citizenry of Newbern, including the postmaster, the editor of the *Advance*, and Rapp, Senior, of Rapp Brothers, Jewellery. The last two were arguing politics and the country's welfare. Rapp, Senior, believed and said that the country was going to the dogs, because the rich were getting richer and the poor were getting poorer. The editor of the *Advance* disputed this, and the postmaster intervened to ask if Rapp, Senior, had seen what our exports of wheat and cotton were lately. Rapp, Senior, said he didn't care anything about that—it was the interests he was down on. Herman Vielhaber, melding eighty kings, said it was a good rich-man's country, but also a good poor-man's country, because where could you find one half as good—not in all Europe—and he now laid down forty jacks, which he huskily called "yacks."

Dave Cowan greeted the company and seated himself at a vacant table.

"Pull up a chair, Buzzer, and we'll drink to the life force—old electricity or something."

"Yes, sir," said Wilbur, and seated himself.

Minna left the pinochle game to attend upon them. She was plump and pink-faced, with thick yellow hair neatly done. A broad white apron protected her dress of light blue.

"A stein of Pilsener, Minna," said Dave, "and for the boy, let's see. How would you like, a nice cold bottle of pop, Doctor?"

"Yes, sir," said Wilbur. "Strawberry pop."

Herman looked up from his game, though in the midst of warm utterance in his native tongue at the immediate perverse fall of the cards.

"I guess you git the young one a big glass milk, mamma—yes? Better than pop for young ones. Pop is belly wash."

"Yes, ma'am," said Wilbur to Minna, though he would

have preferred the pop by reason of its colour and its vivacious prickling; and you could have milk at home.

"And I tell you, Minna," said Dave. "Bread and butter and cheese, lots of it, rye bread and pumpernickel and Schweitzerkase and some pickles and radishes, *nicht wahr?*"

"Yes," said Minna, "all!" and moved on to the bar. But Dave detained her.

"Minna!"

She stopped and turned back to him.

"You will?"

"*Sprechen sie Deutsch*, Minna?"

"*Ja*—yes—why not? I should think I do. I always could. Why couldn't I?"

She went on her mission, grumbling pettishly. Why shouldn't she speak her own language? What did the man think? He must be a joker!

"Mamma!" Herman called again. "Git also the young one some that *apfel kuchen*. You make it awful good."

"Yes," called Minna from the bar. "I git it. For why wouldn't I speak my own language, I like to know?"

Dave Cowan's jest was smouldering faintly within her. She returned presently with the stein of beer and a glass of milk, and went, still muttering, for the food that had been commanded. She returned with this, setting bread and butter and cheese before them, and a blue plate whose extensive area was all but covered with apple cake, but now she no longer muttered in bewilderment. She confronted the jester, hands upon hips, her doll eyes shining with triumph.

"Hah! Now, mister, I ask you something good like you ask me. You git ready! *Sprechen sie English?*"

Daven Cowan affected to be overcome with confusion, while Minna laughed loud and long at her sally. Herman laughed with her, his head back and huge red beard lifted from his chest.

"She got you that time, mister!" he called to Dave. "Mamma's a bright one, give her a minute so she gits herself on the spot!"

"*Ja! Sprechen sie English?*" taunted Minna again, for a second relish of her repartee. Effusively, in her triumph, she patted the cheek of the Wilbur twin. "*Ja!* I could easy enough give your poppa as good like he sent, yes? *Sprechen sie English, nicht wahr?*"

Again her bulk trembled with honest mirth, and while this endured she went to the ice box and brought a bone for Frank, the dog. Frank fell upon it with noisy gurgles.

Dave Cowan affected further confusion at each repetition of Minna's stinging retort; acted it so convincingly that the victor at length relented and brought a plate of cookies to the table.

"I show you who is it should be foolish in the head!" she told him triumphantly.

"You got me, Minna—I admit it."

The victim pretended to be downcast, and ate his bread and cheese dejectedly. Minna went to another table to tell over the choice bit.

The Wilbur twin ate bread and cheese and looked with interest about the room. The tables and woodwork were dark, the walls and ceiling also low in tone. But there were some fine decorative notes that stood brightly out. On one wall was a lovely gold-framed picture in which a young woman of great beauty held back a sumptuous curtain revealing a castle on the Rhine set above a sunny terrace of grapevines. On the opposite wall was a richly coloured picture of a superb brewery. It was many stories in height; smoke issued from its chimneys, and before it stood a large truck to which were hitched two splendid horses. The truck was being loaded with the brewery's enlivening product. The brewery was red, the truck yellow, the horses gray, and the workmen were clad in blue, and above all was a flawless sky of blue. It was a spirited picture, and the Wilbur twin was instantly enamoured of it. He wished he might have seen this yesterday, when he was rich. Maybe Mr. Vielhaber would have sold it. He thought regretfully of Winona's delight at receiving the beautiful thing to hang

on the wall of the parlour, a fit companion piece to the lion picture. But he had spent his money, and this lovely thing could never be Winona's.

Discussion of world affairs still went forward between Rapp, Senior, and the *Advance* editor. Even in that day the cost of living was said to be excessive, and Rapp, Senior, though accounting for its rise by the iniquity of the interests, submitted that the cost of women's finery was what kept the world poor.

"It's women's tomfool dressing keeps us all down. Look what they pay for their silks and satins and kickshaws and silly furbelows! That's where the bulk of our money goes: bonnets and high-heeled slippers and fancy cloaks. Take the money spent for women's foolish truck and see what you'd have!" Rapp, Senior, gazed about him, looking for contradiction.

"He's right," said Dave Cowan. "He's got the truth of it. But, my Lord! Did you ever think what women would be without all that stuff? Look what it does for 'em! Would you have 'em look like us? Would you have a beautiful woman wear a cheap suit of clothes like Rapp's got on, and a hat bought two years ago? Not in a thousand years! We dress 'em up that way because we like 'em that way."

Rapp, Senior, dusted the lapel of his coat, tugged at his waistcoat to straighten it, and closely regarded a hat that he had supposed beyond criticism.

"That's all right," he said, "but look where it gets us!"

Presently the discussion ended—Rapp, Senior, still on the note of pessimism and in the fell clutch of the interests—for the debaters must go blamelessly home to their suppers. Only the mayor remained at his game with Herman, his gray, shaven old face bent above his cards while he muttered at them resentfully. Dave Cowan ate his bread and cheese with relish and invoked another stein of beer from Minna, who vindictively flung her jest at him again as she brought it.

The Wilbur twin had eaten his apple cake and was now eating the cookies, taking care to drop no crumbs on the

sanded floor. After many cookies dusk fell and he heard the church bells ring for evening worship. But no one heeded them. The game drew to an excited finish, while Dave Cowan, his pipe lighted, mused absently and from time to time quoted bits of verse softly to himself:

Enchanted ports we, too, shall touch;
Cadiz or Cameroon——

The game ended with an explosion of rage from the mayor. The cards had continued perverse for him. He pushed his soft black hat back from his rumpled crest of gray hair and commanded Minna Vielhaber to break a municipal ordinance which had received his official sanction. Herman cheerily combed his red beard and scoffed at his late opponent.

"It makes dark," Minna reminded him. "You should have light."

Herman lighted two lamps suspended above the tables. Then he addressed the Wilbur twin, now skillfully prolonging the last of his cookies.

"Well, young one, you like your bread and cheese and milk and cookies and apfel kuchen, so? Well, I tell you—come here. I show you something fine."

He went to the front room, where the bar was, and the Wilbur twin expectantly followed. He had learned that these good people produced all manner of delights. But this was nothing to eat. The light from the lamps shone over the partition between back room and front, and there in a spacious cage beside the wall was a monkey, a small, sad-eyed creature with an aged, wrinkled face all but human. He crouched in a corner and had been piling wisps of straw upon his reverend head.

"Gee, gosh!" exclaimed the Wilbur twin, for he had expected nothing so rare as this.

The monkey at sight of Herman became animated, leaping again and again the length of the cage and thrusting between its bars a hairy forearm and a little, pinkish, human hand.

"You like him, hey?" said Herman.

"Gee, gosh!" again exclaimed the Wilbur twin in sheer delight.

"It's Emil his name is," said Herman. "You want out, Emil, hey?"

He unclasped the catch of a door, and Emil leaped to the crook of his arm, where he nestled, one hand securely grasping a fold of Herman's beard.

"Ouch, now, don't pull them whiskers!" warned Herman. "See how he knows his good friend! But he shake hands like a gentleman. Emil, shake hands nicely with this young one." The monkey timidly extended a paw and the entranced Wilbur shook it. "Come," said Herman. "I let you give him something."

They went to the back room, Emil still stoutly grasping the beard of his protector.

"Now," said Herman, "you give him a nice fat banana. Mamma, give the young one a banana to give to Emil."

The banana was brought and the Wilbur twin cautiously extended it. Emil, at sight of the fruit, chattered madly and tried to leap for it. He appeared to believe that this strange being meant to deprive him of it. He snatched it when it was thrust nearer, still regarding the boy with dark suspicion. Then he deftly peeled the fruit and hurriedly ate it, as if one could not be—with strangers about—too sure of one's supper.

The monkey moved Dave Cowan to lecture again upon the mysteries of organic evolution.

"About three hundred million years difference between those two," he said, indicating Herman and his pet with a wave of the calabash. "And it's no good asking whether it's worth while, because we have to go on and on. That little beast is your second cousin, Herman."

"I got a Cousin Emil in the old country," said Minna, "but he ain't lookin' like this last time I seen him. I guess you're foolish in the head again."

"He came out of the forest and learned to stand up, to

walk without using his hands, and he got a thumb, and pretty soon he was able to be a small-town mayor or run a nice decent saloon and argue about politics."

"Hah, that's a good one!" said Herman. "You hear what he says, Emil?"

The beast looked up from his banana, regarding them from eyes unutterably sad.

"See?" said Dave. "That's the life force, and for a minute it's conscious that it's only a monkey."

They became silent under Emil's gaze of acute pathos—human life aware of its present frustration. Then suddenly Emil became once more an animated and hungry monkey with no care but for his food.

"There," said Dave. "I ask you, isn't that the way we do? Don't we stop to think sometimes and get way down, and then don't we feel hungry and forget it all and go to eating?"

"Sure, Emil is sensible just like us," said Minna.

"But there's some catch about the whole thing," said Dave. "Say, Doc, what do you think life is, anyway?"

Purdy scanned the monkey with shrewd eyes, and grinned.

"I only know what it is physiologically," he said. "Physiologically, life is a constant force rhythmically overcoming a constant resistance."

"Pretty good," said Dave, treasuring the phrase. "The catch must be right there—it always does overcome the constant resistance."

"When it can't in one plant," said Purdy, "it dismantles it and builds another, making improvements from time to time."

"Think what it's had to do," said Dave, "to build Herman from a simple, unimproved plant like Emil! Herman's a great improvement on Emil."

"My Herman has got a soul," said Minna, stoutly—"monkeys ain't."

Dave Cowan and Purdy exchanged a tolerant smile. They were above arguing that outworn thesis. Dave turned to his son.

"Anyway, Buzzer, if you ever get discouraged, remember we were all like that once, and cheer up. Remember your ancestry goes straight back to one of those, and still back of that——"

"To the single cell of protoplasm," said Purdy.

"Beyond that," said Dave, "to star dust."

"Yes, sir," said Wilbur.

"Foolish in the head," said Minna. "You think you know things better than the reverent what preaches at the Lutheran church! He could easy enough tell you what you come from. My family was in Bavaria more than two hundred years, and was not any monkeys."

"Maybe Emil he got a soul, too, like a human," remarked Herman.

"You bet he has," said Dave Cowan, firmly—"just like a human."

"You put him to bed," directed Minna. "He listen to such talk and go foolish also in the head."

The Wilbur twin watched Emil put to bed, then followed his father out into the quiet, starlit streets. He was living over again an eventful afternoon. They reached the Pennimen porch without further talk. Dave Cowan sat with his guitar in the judge's chair and lazily sounded chords and little fragments of melody. After a time the Pennimans and the Merle twin came from church. The Wilbur twin excitedly sought Winona, having much to tell her. He drew her beside him into the hammock, and was too eager for more than a moment's dismay when she discovered his bare feet, though he had meant to put on shoes and stockings again before she saw him.

"Barefooted on Sunday!" said Winona in tones of prim horror.

"It was so hot," he pleaded; "but listen," and he rushed headlong into his narrative.

His father knew gypsies, and had been to Chicago and Omaha and—and Cadiz and Cameroon—and he was sorry for Miss Juliana Whipple because she was a small-towner

and no one had ever kissed her since her mother died; and if ever gypsies did carry him off he didn't want any one to worry about him or try to get him back; and the Vielhabers were very nice people that kept a nice saloon; and Mrs. Vielhaber had given him lots of apple cake that was almost like an apple pie, but without any top on it; and they had a lovely picture that would look well beside the lion picture, but it would probably cost too much money; and they had a monkey, a German monkey, that was just like a little old man; and once, thousands of years ago, when the Bible was going on, we were all monkeys and lived in trees, but a constant force made us stand and walk like people.

To Winona this was a shocking narrative, and she wished to tell Dave Cowan that he was having a wretched influence upon the boy, but Dave was now singing "In the Gloaming," and she knew he would merely call her Madame la Marquise, the toast of all the court, or something else unsuitable to a Sabbath evening. She tried to convey to the Wilbur twin that sitting in a low drinking saloon at any time was an evil thing.

"Anyway," said he, protestingly, "you say I should always learn something, and I learned about us coming up from the monkeys."

"Why, Wilbur Cowan! How awful! Have you forgotten everything you ever learned at Sunday-school?"

"But I saw the monkey," he persisted, "and my father said so, and Doctor Purdy said so."

Winona considered.

"Even so," she warned him, "even if we did come up from the lower orders, the less said about it the better."

He had regarded his putative descent without prejudice; he was sorry that Winona should find scandal in it.

"Well," he remarked to relieve her, "anyway, there's some catch in it. My father said so."

CHAPTER VI

WILBUR COWAN went off to bed, only a little concerned by this new-found flaw in his ancestry. He would have thought it more important could he have known that this same Cowan ancestry was under analysis at the Whipple New Place.

There the three existing male Whipples sat about a long, magazine-littered table in the library and smoked and thought and at long intervals favoured one another with fragmentary speech. Gideon sat erect in his chair or stood before the fireplace, now banked with ferns; black-clad, tall and thin and straight in the comely pleasance of his sixty years, his face smoothly shaven, his cheekbones jutting above depressed cheeks that fell to his narrow, pointed chin, his blue eyes crackling far under the brow, high and narrow and shaded with ruffling gray hair, still plenteous. His ordinary aspect was severe, almost saturnine; but he was wont to destroy this effect with his thin-lipped smile that broke winningly over small white teeth and surprisingly hinted an alert young man behind these flickering shadows of age. When he sat he sat gracefully erect; when he stood to face the other two, or paced the length of the table, he stood straight or moved with supple joints. He was smoking a cigar with fastidious relish, and seemed to commune more with it than with his son or his brother. Beside Sharon Whipple his dress seemed foppish.

Sharon, the round, stout man, two years younger than Gideon, had the same blue eyes, but they looked from a face plump, florid, vivacious. There was a hint of the choleric in his glance. His hair had been lighter than Gideon's, and though now not so plentiful, had grayed less noticeably.

His fairer skin was bedizened with freckles; and when with a blunt thumb he pushed up the outer ends of his heavy eyebrows or cocked the thumb at a speaker whose views he did not share, it could be seen that he was the most aggressive of the three men. Sharon notoriously lost his temper. Gideon had never been known to lose his. Sharon smoked and lolled carelessly in a Morris chair, one short, stout arm laid along its side, the other carelessly wielding the cigar, heedless of falling ashes. Beside the careful Gideon he looked rustic.

Harvey D., son of Gideon, worriedly paced the length of the room. His eyes were large behind thick glasses. He smoked a cigarette gingerly, not inhaling its smoke, but ridding himself of it in little puffs of distaste. His brown beard was neatly trimmed, and above it shone his forehead, pale and beautifully modelled under the carefully parted, already thinning, hair that was arranged in something almost like ringlets on either side. He was neat-faced. Of the three men he carried the Whipple nose most gracefully. His figure was slight, not so tall as his father's, and he was garbed in a more dapper fashion. He wore an expertly fitted frock coat of black, gray trousers faintly striped, a pearl-gray cravat skewered by a pear-headed pin, and his small feet were incased in shoes of patent leather. He was arrayed as befitted a Whipple who had become a banker.

Gideon, his father, achieved something of a dapper effect in an old-fashioned manner, but no observer would have read him for a banker; while Sharon, even on a Sunday evening, in loose tweeds and stout boots, was but a country gentleman who thought little about dress, so that one would not have guessed him a banker—rather the sort that makes banking a career of profit.

Careful Harvey D., holding a cigarette carefully between slender white fingers, dressed with studious attention, neatly bearded, with shining hair curled flatly above his pale, wide forehead, was the one to look out from behind a grille and appraise credits. He never acted hastily, and was finding more worry in this moment than ever his years of banking

had cost him. He walked now to an ash tray and fastidiously trimmed the end of his cigarette. With the look of worry he regarded his father, now before the fireplace after the manner of one enjoying its warmth, and his Uncle Sharon, who was brushing cigar ash from his rumpled waistcoat to the rug below.

"It's no light thing to do," said Harvey D. in his precise syllables.

The others smoked as if unhearing. Harvey D. walked to the opposite wall and straightened a picture, The Reading of Homer, shifting its frame precisely one half an inch.

"It is overchancy." This from Gideon after a long silence.

Harvey D. paused in his walk, regarded the floor in front of him critically, and stooped to pick up a tiny scrap of paper, which he brought to the table and laid ceremoniously in the ash tray.

"Overchancy," he repeated.

"Everything overchancy," said Sharon Whipple after another silence, waving his cigar largely at life. "She's a self-headed little tike," he added a moment later.

"Self-headed!"

Harvey D. here made loose-wristed gestures meaning despair, after which he detected and put in its proper place a burned match beside Sharon's chair.

"A bright boy enough!" said Gideon after another silence, during which Harvey D. had twice paced the length of the room, taking care to bring each of his patent-leather toes precisely across the repeated pattern in the carpet.

"Other one got the gumption, though," said Sharon.

"Oh, gumption!" said Harvey D., as if this were no rare gift. All three smoked again for a pregnant interval.

"Has good points," offered Gideon. "Got all the points, in fact. Good build, good skin, good teeth, good eyes and wide between; nice manners, polite, lively mind."

"Other one got the gumption," mumbled Sharon, stubbornly. They ignored him.

"Head on him for affairs, too," said Harvey D. He went

to a far corner of the room and changed the position of an immense upholstered chair so that it was equidistant from each wall. "Other one—hear he took all his silver and spent it foolishly—must have been eight or nine dollars—this one wanted to save it. Got some idea about the value of money."

"Don't like to see it show too young," submitted Sharon.

"Can't show too young," declared Harvey D.

"Can't it?" asked Sharon, mildly.

"Bright little chap—no denying that," said Gideon. "Bright as a new penny, smart as a whip. Talks right. Other chap mumbles."

"Got the gumption, though." Thus Sharon once more.

Long silences intervened after each speech in this dialogue.

"Head's good," said Harvey D. "One of those long heads like father's. Other one's head is round."

"My own head is round." This was Sharon. His tone was plaintive.

"Of course neither of them has a nose," said Gideon.

He meant that neither of the twins had a nose in the Whipple sense, but no comment on this lack seemed to be required. It would be unfair to expect a true nose in any but born Whipples.

Gideon Whipple from before the fireplace swayed forward on his toes and waved his half-smoked cigar.

"The long and short of it is—the Whipple stock has run low. We're dying out."

"Got to have new blood, that's sure," said Sharon. "Build it up again."

"I'd often thought of adopting," said Harvey D., "in the last two years," he carefully added.

"This youngster," said Gideon; "of course we should never have heard of him but for Pat's mad adventure, starting off with God only knows what visions in her little head."

"She'd have gone, too," said Sharon, dusting ashes from his waistcoat to the rug. "Self-headed!"

"She demands a brother," resumed Gideon, "and the

family sorely needs she should have one, and this youngster seems eligible, and so——" He waved his cigar.

"There really doesn't seem any other way," said Harvey D. at the table, putting a disordered pile of magazines into neat alignment.

"What about pedigree?" demanded Sharon. "Any one traced him back?"

"I believe *his* father is here," said Harvey D.

"I know him," said Sharon. "A mad, swearing, confident fellow, reckless, vagrant-like. A printer by trade. Looks healthy enough. Don't seem blemished. But what about his father?"

"Is the boy's mother known?" asked Harvey D.

"Easy to find out," said Gideon. "Ask Sarah Marwick," and he went to the wall and pushed a button. "Sarah knows the history of every one, scandalous and otherwise."

Sarah Marwick came presently to the door, an austere spinster in black gown and white apron. Her nose, though not Whipple in any degree, was still eminent in a way of its own, and her lips shut beneath it in a straight line. She waited.

"Sarah," said Gideon, "do you know a person named Cowan? David Cowan, I believe it is."

Sarah's mien of professional reserve melted.

"Do I know Dave Cowan?" she challenged. "Do I know him? I'd know his hide in a tanyard."

"That would seem sufficient," remarked Gideon.

"A harum-scarum good-for-nothing—no harm in him. A great talker—make you think black is white if you listen. Don't stay here much—in and out, no one knows where to. Says the Center is slow. What do you think of that? I guess we're fast enough for most folks."

"What about his father?" said the stock-breeding Sharon. "Know anything about who he was?"

"Lord, yes! Everybody round here used to know old Matthew Cowan. Lived up in Geneseo, where Dave was born, but used to come round here preaching. Queer old

customer with a big head. He wasn't a regular preacher; he just took it up, being a carpenter by trade—like our Lord Jesus, he used to say in his preaching. He had some outlandish kind of religion that didn't take much. He said the world was coming to an end on a certain day, and folks had better prepare for it, but it didn't end when he said it would; and he went back to carpentering week-days and preaching on the Lord's Day; and one time he fell off a roof and hit on his head, and after that he was outlandisher than ever, and they had to look after him. He never did get right again. They said he died writing a telegram to our Lord on the wall of his room. This Dave Cowan, he argued about religion with the Reverend Mallet right up in the post office one day. He'll argue about anything! He's audacious!"

"But the father was all right till he had the fall?" asked Harvey D. "I mean he was healthy and all that?"

"Oh, healthy enough—big, strong old codger. He used to say he could cradle four acres of grain in a day when he was a boy on a farm, or split and lay up three hundred and fifty rails. Strong enough."

"And this David Cowan, his son—he married someone from here?"

"Her that was Effie Freeman and her mother was a Penniman, cousin to old Judge Penniman. A sweet, lovely little thing, Effie was, too, just as nice as you'd want to meet, and so——"

"Healthy?" demanded Sharon.

"Healthy enough till she had them twins. Always puny after that. Took to her bed and passed on when they was four. Dropped off the tree of life like an overfruited branch, you might say. Winona and Mis' Penniman been mothers to the twins ever since."

"The record seems to be fairly clear," said Gideon.

"If he hasn't inherited that queer streak for religion," said Harvey D., foreseeing a possible inharmony with what Rapp, Senior, would have called the interests.

"Thank you, Sarah—we were just asking," said Gideon.

"You're welcome," said Sarah, withdrawing. She threw them a last bit over her shoulder. "That Dave Cowan's an awful reader—reads library books and everything. Some say he knows more than the editor of the *Advance* himself."

They waited until they heard a door swing to upon Sarah.

"Other has the gumption," said Sharon. But this was going in a circle. Gideon and Harvey D. ignored it as having already been answered.

"Well," said Harvey D., "I suppose we should call it settled."

"Overchancy," said Gideon, "but so would any boy be. This one is an excellent prospect, sound as a nut, bright, well-mannered."

"He made an excellent impression on me after church today," said Harvey D. "Quite refined."

"Re-fined," said Sharon, "is something any one can get to be. It's manners you learn." But again he was ignored.

"Something clean and manly about him," said Harvey D. "I should like him—like him for my son."

"Has it occurred to either of you," asked Gideon, "that this absurd father will have to be consulted in such a matter?"

"But naturally!" said Harvey D. "An arrangement would have to be made with him."

"But has it occurred to you," persisted Gideon, "that he might be absurd enough not to want one of his children taken over by strangers?"

"Strangers?" said Harvey D. in mild surprise, as if Whipples could with any justice be thus described.

Gideon, however, was able to reason upon this.

"He might seem loth at first, I dare say; but we can make plain to him the advantages the boy would enjoy. I imagine they would appeal to him. I imagine he would consent readily."

"Oh, but of course," said Harvey D. "The father is a nobody, and the boy, left to himself, would probably become

another nobody, without training, without education, without advantages. The father would know all this."

"Perhaps he doesn't even know he is a nobody," suggested Sharon.

"I think we can persuade him," said Harvey D., for once not meaning precisely what his words would seem to mean.

"I hope so," said Gideon, "Pat will be pleased."

"I shall like to have a son," said Harvey D., frankly wistful.

"Other one has the gumption," said Sharon, casting a final rain of cigar ash upon the abused rug at his feet.

"The sands of the Whipple family were running out—we renew them," said Gideon, cheerily.

CHAPTER VII

THE ensuing week was marked for the Cowan-Penniman household by sensational developments. To Dave Cowan on Monday morning, standing at his case in the *Advance* office, nimbly filling his stick with type, following the loosely written copy turned in by Sam Pickering, the editor, had portentously come a messenger from the First National Bank to know if Mr. Cowan could find it convenient that day to give Harvey D. Whipple a few moments of his time. Dave's business life had hitherto not included any contact with bankers; he had simply never been in a bank. The message left him not a little disturbed.

The messenger, Julius Farrow, a bookkeeper, could answer no questions. He knew only that Harvey D. had been very polite about it, and if Dave couldn't find it convenient to-day he was to say when he might find it convenient to have a conference. Dave felt relieved at hearing the word "conference." A mere summons to a strange place like a bank might be sinister, but a polite invitation to a conference at his convenience was different. He put down his half-filled stick. He had been at work on the *Advance* locals for the Wednesday paper, two and three-line items to tell of the trivial going and coming of nobodies which he was wont to set up with an accompaniment of satirical comment on small-town activities. He had broken off in the midst of perpetuating in brevier type the circumstance that Adelia May Simsbury was home from normal school over Sunday to visit her parents, Rufus G. Simsbury and wife, north of town.

"I'll go with you," Dave told Julius Farrow. "I can always find a little time for bankers. I never kept one wait-

"'I CAN ALWAYS FIND A LITTLE TIME FOR BANKERS. I NEVER KEPT ONE WAITING YET AND I WON'T BEGIN NOW.'"

ing yet, and I won't begin now. Ask any of 'em—they'll tell you I come when called."

Julius looked puzzled, but offered no comment. Dave doffed his green eye-shade and his apron of striped ticking, hastily dampened his hands in the tin washbasin and wiped them on a roller towel rich in historic associations. He spent a moment upon his hair before a small, wavy, and diagonally cracked mirror, put on his blue cutaway coat and his derby hat and called, "Back in five minutes, Sam," casually into the open door of another room, where Sam Pickering wrestled with a fearless editorial on the need of better street lighting. It seemed to Dave that five minutes would amply suffice for any talk a banker might be needing with him.

In the back office of the First National Bank he was presently ensconced at a shining table of mahogany across from Harvey D. Whipple and his father—the dubious trousers and worn shoes hidden beneath the table so that visibly he was all but well dressed.

"Smoke?" asked Gideon, and proffered an open cigar case.

"Thanks," said Dave, "I'll smoke it later."

He placed a cigar in the upper left-hand pocket of the eminently plaid waistcoat from whence already protruded the handle of a toothbrush and a fountain pen. He preened his moustache, smoothed his hair, waited.

Harvey D. coughed in a promising manner, set a wire basket of papers square with the corners of the table, and began.

"We have been thinking, Mr. Cowan, my father and I—you see——"

He talked on, but without appeasing Dave's curiosity. Something about Dave's having boys, he gathered, and about the Whipples not having them; but it occurred to Dave again and again as Harvey wandered on that this was a discrepancy not in his power to correct. Once a monstrous suspicion startled him—this conference, so called, was shaping into nothing less than a proposal on behalf of the person he had so carelessly saluted the day before. It was terrifying;

he grew cold with pure fright. But that was like some women—once show them a little attention, they expected everything!

Gideon Whipple mercifully broke in while Harvey D. floundered upon an inconclusive period. Gideon was not nervous, and saw little need for strategy with this rather vagabondish fellow.

"In short, Mr. Cowan, my son offers to adopt that boy of yours—make him his own son in name—and opportunities and advantages—his own son."

So it was only that! Dave drew a long, pleasant breath and wiped his brow. Then he took a pencil from the table and began to draw squares and triangles and diamond patterns upon a pad of soft paper that lay at hand.

"Well—I don't know." His eyes followed the pencil point. Nor did he know until it presently developed that the desired adoption was of the Merle twin. He had supposed, without debate, that they would be meaning the other. "You mean Merle," he said at last on some leading of Gideon's.

"To be sure!" said Harvey D., as if there could have been no question of another.

"Oh, him!" said Dave—there was relief in his tone. "You're sure you mean him?"

"But of course!" said Harvey D., brightening.

"All right," said Dave. He felt they were taking the wrong twin, but he felt also that he must not let them see this—they might then want the other. "All right, I'll agree to that. He's a bright boy; it ought to be a good thing for him."

"Ought to be!" quoted Harvey D. with humorous warmth. "But, of course, it will be! You realize what it will mean for him—advantages, opportunities, education, travel, family, a future—the Whipple estate—but, of course, we feel that under our training he will be a credit to us. He will be one of us—a Whipple in name and in fact."

Dave Cowan ceased to draw angled designs on his

pad; he now drew circles, ovals, ellipses, things fluent with curves.

"All right," he said, "I'm willing, I want to do the best I can for the boy. I'm glad you feel he's the right one for you. Of course the other boy—well, they're twins, but he's different."

"We are certain you will never regret it," said Harvey D., warmly.

"We feel that you are wise to agree," said Gideon. "So then——"

"Papers to sign?" said Dave.

"Our lawyer will have them to-morrow," said Harvey D.

"Good!" said Dave.

He was presently back at his case, embalming for posterity the knowledge that Grandma Milledge was able to be out again these sunny days after a hard tussle with her old enemy sciatica. But before passing to the next item he took Gideon's choice cigar from the upper waistcoat pocket, crumpled it, rubbed it to fine bits between the palms of his hands, and filled the calabash pipe with its débris. As he smoked he looked out the window that gave on River Street. Across the way was the yellow brick structure of the bank he had just left. He was seeing a future president of that sound institution, Merle Whipple, born Cowan. He was glad they hadn't wanted the other one. The other one would want to be something more interesting surely than a small-town bank president. Have him learn a good loose trade and see the world—get into real life! But they'd had him going for a minute—when the only meaning he could get from Harvey D.'s roundabout talk was that the old girl of yesterday had misunderstood his attentions That would have been a nice fix to find himself in! But Merle was off his mind; he would become a real Whipple and some day be the head of the family. Funny thing for a Cowan to fall into! He turned to his dusty case and set up the next item on his yellow copy paper.

"Rumour hath it that Sandy Seaver's Sunday trips out of

town mean business, and that a certain bright resident of Geneseo will shortly become Mrs. Sandy."

He paused again. All at once it seemed to him that the Whipples had been hasty. They would get to thinking the thing over and drop it; never mention it to him again. Well, he was willing to let it drop. He wouldn't mention it again if they didn't. He would tell no one.

Nor did he speak of it until the following evening, after the Whipples had surprisingly not only mentioned it again but had operated in the little bank office, under the supervision of Squire Culbreth, a simple mechanism of the law which left him the legal father of but one son. Then he went to astonish the Pennimans with his news, only to find that Winona had secretively nursed it even longer than he had. Mrs. Penniman had also been told of the probability of this great event, but, nevertheless, wept gently when Dave certified to her its irrevocable consummation. Only Judge Penniman remained to be startled; and he, being irritated that others had enjoyed a foreknowledge guiltily withheld from him, chose to pretend that he, too, had been mysteriously enlightened. He had, he said, seen the thing coming. He became at the supper table a creature of gnawing and baffled curiosity which he must hide by boasting an intimate acquaintance with Whipple motives and intentions. He intimated that but for his advice and counsel the great event might not have come about. The initiative had been his, though certain other people might claim the credit. Of course he hadn't wanted to talk about it before. He guessed he could keep a close mouth as well as the next one.

The Merle twin at this momentous meal sat as one enthroned, receiving tribute from fawning subjects. His name was already Merle Whipple, and he was going to have a pony to ride, and he would come sometimes to see them. His cordial tolerance of them quite overcame Mrs. Penniman again. She had to feign an errand to the kitchen stove, and came back dropping the edge of her apron from her eyes.

Winona was exalted; she felt that her careful training of the child had raised him to this eminence, and she rejoiced in it as a tribute to her capacity. Her labours had been richly rewarded. Dave Cowan alone seemed not to be enough impressed by the honours heaped upon his son. He jestingly spoke of him as a crown prince. He said if you really had to stay in a small town you might as well be adopted by the Whipples as any one else.

The Wilbur twin was abashed and puzzled. The detail most impressing him seemed to be that, having no longer a brother, he would cease to be a twin. His life long he had been made intensely conscious of being a twin—he was one of a pair—and now suddenly, he gathered, he was something whole and complete in himself. He demanded assurance on this point.

"Then I'm not going to be a twin any longer? I mean, I'm not going to be one of a twins? It won't change my name, too, will it?"

His father enlightened him.

"No, there's still a couple of Cowans left to keep the name going. We won't have to be small-towners unless we want to," he added.

He suspected that the Wilbur twin felt slighted and hurt at being passed over, and would be needing comfort. But it appeared that the severed twin felt nothing of that sort. He was merely curious—not wounded or envious.

"I wouldn't want to change to a new name," he declared. "I'd forget and go back to the old one."

He wanted to add that maybe his new dog would not know him under another name, but he was afraid of being laughed at for that.

"Merle never forgets," said Winona. "He will be a shining credit to his new name." She helped the chosen one to more jelly, which he accepted amiably. "And he will be a lovely little brother to Patricia Whipple," she fondly added.

This left the Wilbur twin cold. He would like to have a pony, but he would not wish to be Patricia Whipple's brother.

He now recalled her unpleasantly. She was a difficult person.

"Give Merle another bit of the steak, Mother," urged Judge Penniman.

The judge had begun to dwell upon his own new importance. This thing made him by law a connection of the Whipple family, didn't it? He, Rufus Tyler Penniman, had become at least a partial Whipple. He reflected pleasantly upon the consequences.

"Will he go home to-night?" suddenly demanded the Wilbur twin, pointing at his brother so there should be no mistake. The Merle twin seemed already a stranger to him.

"Not to-night, dear, but in a few days, I would suppose." It sent Mrs. Penniman to the stove again.

"I don't just know when I will go," said the Merle twin, surveying a replenished plate. "But I guess I'll give you back that knife you bought me; I probably won't need it up there. I'll probably have plenty of better knives than that knife."

The Wilbur twin questioned this, but hid his doubt. Surely there could be few better knives in the whole world than one with a thing to dig stones out of horses' feet. Anyway, he would be glad to have it, and was glad the promise had been made before witnesses.

After supper on the porch Dave Cowan in the hammock picked chords and scraps of melody from his guitar, quite as if nothing had happened. Judge Penniman, in his wicker chair, continued to muse upon certain pleasant contingencies of this new situation. It had occurred to him that Dave Cowan himself would be even more a Whipple than any Penniman, and would enjoy superior advantages inevitably rising from this circumstance.

"That family will naturally want to do something for you, too, Dave," he said at last.

"Do something for me?" Dave's fingers hung waiting above the strings.

"Why not? You're the boy's father, ain't you? Facts

is facts, no matter what the law says. You're his absolute progenitor, ain't you? Well, you living here in the same town, they'll naturally want you to be somebody, won't they?"

"Oh!" Dave struck the waiting chord. "Well, I am somebody, ain't I?"

The judge waved this aside with a fat, deprecating hand.

"Oh, in that way! Of course, everybody's somebody—every living, breathing soul. But what I'm getting at—they'll naturally try to make something out of you, instead of just being kind of a no-account tramp printer."

"Ha! Is that so, old small-towner?"

"Shouldn't wonder if they'd want to take you into the bank, mebbe—cashier or something, or manage one of the farms or factories, or set you up in business of some kind. You might git to be president of the First National."

"They might make you a director, too, I suppose."

"Well, you can snicker, but stranger things have happened."

The judge reflected, seeing himself truly a bank director, wearing his silk hat and frock coat every day—perhaps playing checkers with Harvey D. in the back office at quiet moments. Bank directing would surely be a suitable occupation for an invalid. Dave muted the vibrant strings with a hand.

"Listen, Old Flapdoodle! I wouldn't tie myself up in this one-horse bunch of hovels, not if they'd give me the bank and all the money in it and all the Whipple farms and throw in the post office and the jail and the depot. Get that?"

"Ho! Sour grapes!" returned the judge, stung to a biting wit by the coarse form of address. But Dave played music above the taunt.

Nevertheless, he was not wholly surprised the following day when, politely invited to another conference at the bank, old Gideon Whipple, alone there, put the matter of his future somewhat after the manner of Judge Penniman,

though far less crudely. Old Gideon sat across the table from him, and after Dave had put a cigar in his upper left-hand waistcoat pocket he became considerate but pointed.

"My son and I have been talking, Mr. Cowan, and we agree that something is due you as the boy's father. We want to show you every consideration—show it liberally. You seem to have led rather an—shall we say an unsettled life up to this time? Not that it's anything to be criticised; you follow your own tastes, as every man should. But it occurred to us that you might care to feel more settled in some stable occupation where you could look forward to a solid future—all that sort of thing."

Dave nodded, waiting, trying to word the talk the old man and his son would have had about him. Harvey Whipple would have been troubled at the near presence of the father of his new son as a mere journeyman printer. Undoubtedly the two would have used the phrase the judge had used—they would want him to make something of himself.

"So we've felt," went on Gideon, "that you might care to engage in some business here in Newbern—establish yourself, soundly and prosperously, as it were, so that your son, though maturing under different circumstances, would yet feel a pride in your standing in the community. Of course, this is tentative—I'm sounding you, only. You may have quite other ideas. You may have laid out an entirely different future for yourself in some other field. But I wanted to let you know that we stand ready to finance liberally any business you would care to engage in, either here or elsewhere. It isn't that we are crudely offering you money. I wish you to understand that. But we offer you help, both in money and counsel and influence. In the event of your caring to establish yourself here, we would see that your foundation was substantial. I think that says what I wanted to say."

During much of this Dave Cowan had been musing in a lively manner upon the other's supposition that he should have laid out a future for himself. He was amused at the

notion. Of course he had laid out a future, but not the sort a Whipple would lay out. He was already living his future and found it good. Yet he felt the genuine good will of the old man, and sought words to reject his offer gracefully. He must not put it so bluntly as he had to Judge Penniman. The old man would not be able to understand that no bribe within human reach would tempt him to remain in Newbern Center; nor did he wish to be established on a sound basis anywhere else. He did not wish to be established at all.

"I'm much obliged," he said at last, "but I guess I won't trouble you and your son in any way. You see, I kind of like to live round and see things and go places—I don't know that I can explain it exactly."

"We have even thought you might like to acquire the journal on which you are now employed," said Gideon. "We understand it can be bought; we stand ready to purchase it and make it over to you."

"Any country newspaper can always be bought any time," said Dave. "Their owners always want to sell, and it's mighty kind of you and your son, but—well, I just couldn't settle down to be a country editor. I'd go crazy," he confessed in a sudden burst of frankness, and beaming upon Gideon; "I'd as soon be shut in jail."

"Or anything else you might think of," said Gideon, cordially, "not necessarily in this town."

"Well, I'd rather not; I guess I'm not one to have responsibilities; I wouldn't have an easy minute spending your money. I wouldn't ever be able to feel free with it, not the way I feel with my own. I guess I just better kind of go my own way; I like to work when I want to and stop when I want to, and no one having any right to ask me what I quit for and why don't I keep on and make something of myself. I guess it's no good your trying to help me in any way. Of course I appreciate it and all that. It was kindly thought of by you. But—I hope my boy will be a credit to you just the same."

The conference closed upon this. Dave left it feeling that

he had eased his refusal into soft, ambiguous phrases; but old Gideon, reporting to Harvey D., said: "That chap hates a small town. What he really wanted to tell me was that he wouldn't settle down here for all the money in the world. He really laughed at me inside for offering him the chance. He pities us for having to stay here, I do believe. And he wouldn't talk of taking money for any enterprise elsewhere, either. He's either independent or shiftless—both, maybe. He said," Gideon laughed noiselessly, "he said he wouldn't ever be able to feel free with our money the way he does with his own."

The Whipples, it proved, would be in no indecent haste to remove their new member from his humbler environment. On Wednesday it was conveyed to Winona that they would come for Merle in a few days, which left the Penniman household and the twins variously concerned as to the precise meaning of this phrase. It sounded elastic. But on Thursday Winona was able to announce that the day would be Saturday. They would come for Merle Saturday afternoon. She had been told this distinctly by Mrs. Harvey D. Though her informant had set no hour, Winona thought it would be three o'clock. She believed the importance of the affair demanded the setting of an exact hour, and there was something about three o'clock that commended itself to her. From this moment the atmosphere of the Penniman house was increasingly strained. There were preparations. The slender wardrobe of the crown prince of the Whipple dynasty was put in perfect order, and two items newly added to it by the direction of Dave Cowan. The boy must have a new hat and new shoes. The judge pointed out to the prodigal father that these purchases should rightly be made with Whipple money. Dave needn't buy shoes and hats for Merle Whipple any more than he need buy them for any other Whipple, but Dave had stubbornly squandered his own money. His boy wasn't going up to the big house like a ragamuffin.

It came to the Wilbur twin that these days until Saturday were like the days intervening in a house of death until the funeral. He became increasingly shy and uncomfortable. It seemed to him that his brother had passed on, as they said, his mortal remains to be disposed of on Saturday at three o'clock. Having led a good life he would go to heaven, where he would have a pony and a thousand knives if he wanted them. The strain in the house, the excitement of Winona, the periodic, furtive weeping of Mrs. Penniman, the detached, uplifted manner of the chief figure, all confirmed him in this impression. Even Judge Penniman, who had been wont to speak of "them twins," now spoke of "that boy," meaning but the Wilbur twin.

By two o'clock of the momentous Saturday afternoon the tension was at its highest. Merle, dressed in his Sunday clothes, trod squeakily in the new shoes, which were button shoes surpassing in elegance any he had hitherto worn. As Dave Cowan had remarked, they were as good shoes as Whipple money would ever buy him. And the new hat, firm of line and rich in texture, a hat such as no boy could possibly wear except on Sunday, unless he were a very rich boy, reposed on the centre table in the parlour. Winona, flushed and tightly dressed, nervously altered the arrangement of chairs in the parlour, or remembered some belonging of the deceased that should go into the suitcase containing his freshly starched blouses. Mrs. Penniman, also flushed and tightly dressed, affected to busy herself likewise with minor preparations for the departure, but this chiefly afforded her opportunities for quiet weeping in secluded corners. After these moments of relief she would become elaborately cheerful, as if the occasion were festal. Even the judge grew nervous with anticipation. In his frock coat and striped gray trousers he walked heavily from room to room, comparing the clock with his watch, forgetting that he was not supposed to walk freely except with acute suffering. Merle chattered blithely about how he would come back to see them, with unfortunate effects upon Mrs. Penniman.

The Wilbur twin knew this atmosphere. When little Georgie Finkboner had died a few months before, had he not been taken to the house of mourning and compelled to stay through a distressing funeral? It was like that now, and he was uncomfortable beyond endurance. Twice Winona had reminded him that he must go and put on his own Sunday clothes—nothing less than this would be thought suitable. He had said he would, but had dawdled skillfully and was still unfitly in bare feet and the shabby garments of a weekday. He knew definitely now that he was not going to be present at this terrible ceremony.

He had no doubt there would be a ceremony—all the Whipples arriving in their own Sunday clothes, maybe the preacher coming with them; and they would sit silently in the parlour the way they did at the Finkboner house, and maybe the preacher would talk, and maybe they would sing or pray or something, and then they would take Merle away. He was not to be blamed for this happily inaccurate picture; he was justified by the behaviour of Winona and her mother. And he was not going to be there! He wouldn't exactly run away; he felt a morbid wish to watch the thing if he could be apart from it; but he was going to be apart. He remembered too well the scene at the Finkboner house —and the smell of tuberoses. Winona had unaccustomed flowers in the parlour now—not tuberoses, but almost as bad. Until a quarter to three he expertly shuffled and dawdled and evaded. Then Winona took a stand with him.

"Wilbur Cowan, go at once and dress yourself properly! Do you expect to appear before the Whipples that way?"

He vanished in a flurry of seeming obedience. He went openly through the front door of the little house into the side yard, but paused not until he reached its back door, where he stood waiting. When he guessed he had been there fifteen minutes he prepared to change his lurking place. Winona would be coming for him. He stepped out and looked round the corner of the little house, feeling inconsequently the

thrill of a scout among hostile red Indians as described in a favoured romance.

The lawn between the little house and the big house was free of searchers. He drew a long breath and made a swift dash to further obscurity in the lee of the Penniman woodshed. He skirted the end of this structure and peered about its corner, estimating the distance to the side door. But this was risky; it would bring him in view of a kitchen window whence some busybody might observe him. But there was an open window above him giving entrance to the woodshed. He leaped to catch its sill and clambered up to look in. The woodshed was vacant of Pennimans, and its shadowy silence promised security. He dropped from the window ledge. There was no floor beneath, so that the drop was greater than he had counted on. He fell among loose kindling wood with more noise than he would have desired, quickly rose, stumbled in the dusk against a bucket half filled with whitewash, and sprawled again into a pile of soft coal.

"Gee, gosh!" he muttered, heartily, as he rose a second time.

Both the well-spread pallor of the whitewash and the sable sprinkling of coal dust put him beyond any chance of a felicitous public appearance. But he was safe in a dusky corner. He remained there, breathing heavily. At last he heard Winona call him from the Penniman porch. Twice she called; then he knew she would be crossing to the little house to know what detained him. He heard her call again—knew that she would be searching the four rooms over there. She wouldn't think of the woodshed. He sat there a long while, steadily regarding the closed screen door that led to the kitchen, ready to mingle deceptively with the coal should any one appear.

At last he heard a bustle within the house. There were hurried steppings to and fro by Winona and her mother, the heavy tread of the judge, a murmur of high voices. The Whipples must have come, and every one would be at the

front of the house. He crept from his corner, climbed to the floor from where it had been opened for wood and coal, and went softly to the kitchen door. He listened a moment through the screen, then entered and went noiselessly up the back stairs. Coming to the head of the front stairway, he listened again. There were other voices in front, and he shrank to the wall. He gathered that only the Whipple stepmother and Patricia had come—no other Whipples, no preacher. It might not have been so bad. Still he didn't want to be there.

They were at the front door now, headed for the parlour. Someone paused at the foot of the stairs, and in quick alarm he darted along the hall and into an open door. He was in the neat bedroom of Winona, shortbreathed, made doubly nervous by boards that had creaked under his tread. He stood listening. They were in the parlour, a babble of voices coming up to him; excited voices, but not funeral voices. His eyes roved the chamber of Winona, where everything was precisely in its place. He mapped out a dive under her bed if steps came up the stairs. He heard now the piping voice of Patricia Whipple.

"It's like in the book about Ben Blunt that was adopted by a kind old gentleman and went up from rags to riches."

This for some reason seemed to cause laughter below.

He heard, from Winona: "Do try a piece of Mother's cake. Merle, dear, give Mrs. Whipple a plate and napkin."

Cake! Certainly nothing like cake for this occasion had been intimated to him! They hadn't had cake at the Finkboners. Things might have been different, but they had kept still about cake. He listened intently, hearing laughing references to Merle in his new home. Then once more Winona came to the front door and called him.

"Wilbur—Wil-bur-r-r! Where can that child be!" he heard her demand. She went to the back of the house and more faintly he heard her again call his name—"Wilbur, Wil-bur-r-r!" Then, with discernible impatience, more shortly, "Wilbur Cowan!" He was intently regarding a

printed placard that hung on the wall beside Winona's bureau. It read:

A gentleman makes no noise; a lady is serene.—EMERSON.

He remained silent. He was not going to make any noise. At length he could hear preparations for departure.

"Merle, dear, your hat is on the piano—Mother, hand him his hat—I'll bring his suitcase."

"Well, I'll be sure to come back to see you all some day."

"Yes, now don't forget us—no, we mustn't let him do that."

They were out on the porch, going down the walk. The listener stepped lightly to a window and became also a watcher. Ahead walked Patricia Whipple and her new brother. The stepmother and Mrs. Penniman followed. Then came Winona with the suitcase, which was of wicker. Judge Penniman lumbered ponderously behind. At the hitching post in front was the pony cart and the fat pony of sickening memory. Merle was politely helping the stepmother to the driver's seat. It was over. But the watcher suddenly recalled something.

In swift silence, descending the stairs, he entered the parlour. On a stand beneath the powerful picture of the lion behind real bars was a frosted cake of rare beauty. Three pieces were gone and two more were cut. On top of each piece was the half of a walnut meat. He tenderly seized one of these and stole through the deserted house, through kitchen and woodshed, out to the free air again. Back of the woodshed he sat down on the hard bare ground, his back to its wall, looking into the garden where Judge Penniman, in the intervals of his suffering, raised a few vegetables. It was safe seclusion for the pleasant task in hand. He gloated rapturously over the cake, eating first the half of the walnut meat, which he carefully removed. But he thought it didn't taste right.

He now regarded the cake itself uncertainly. It was surely

perfect cake. He broke a fragment from the thin edge and tasted it almost fearfully. It wasn't going right. He persisted with a larger fragment, but upon this he was like to choke; his mouth was dry and curiously no place for even the choicest cake. He wondered about it in something like panic, staring at it in puzzled consternation. There was the choice thing and he couldn't eat it. Then he became aware that his eyes were hot, the lids burning; and there came a choking, even though he no longer had any cake in his mouth. Suddenly he knew that he couldn't eat the cake because he had lost his brother—his brother who had passed on. He gulped alarmingly as the full knowledge overwhelmed him. He was wishing that Merle had kept the knife, even if it wasn't such a good knife, so he would have something to remember him by. Now he would have nothing. He, Wilbur, would always remember Merle, even if he was no longer a twin, but Merle would surely forget him. He had passed on.

Over by the little house he heard the bark of Frank, the dog. Frank's voice was changing, and his bark was now a promising baritone. His owner tried to whistle, but made poor work of this, so he called, "Here, Frank! Here, Frank!" reckless of betraying his own whereabouts. His voice was not clear, it still choked, but it carried; Frank came bounding to him. He had a dog left, anyway—a good fighting dog. His eyes still burned, but they were no longer dry, and his gulps were periodic, threatening a catastrophe of the most dreadful sort.

Frank, the dog, swallowed the cake hungrily, eating it with a terrible ease, as he was wont to eat enemy dogs.

CHAPTER VIII

MIDSUMMER faded into late summer, and Dave Cowan was still small-towning it. To the uninformed he might have seemed a staff, fixed and permanent, to Sam Pickering and the Newbern Center *Advance*. But Sam was not uninformed. He was wise in Dave's ways; he knew the longer Dave stayed the more casually would he flit; an hour's warning and the *Advance* would be needing a printer. So Sam became aware on a day in early September that he would be wise to have a substitute ready. He knew the signs. Dave would become abstracted, stand longer and oftener at the window overlooking the slow life of Newbern. His mind would already be off and away. Then on an afternoon he would tell Sam that he must see a man in Seattle, and if Sam had taken forethought there would be a new printer at the case next day. The present sojourn of Dave's had been longer than any Sam Pickering could remember, for the reason, it seemed, that Dave had been interested in teaching his remaining son a good loose trade.

Directly after the apotheosis of Merle his brother had been taken to the *Advance* office where, perched upon a high stool, his bare legs intricately entwined among its rungs, he had been taught the surface mysteries of typesetting. At first he was merely let to set up quads in his stick, though putting leads between the lines and learning the use of his steel rule. Then he was taught the location of the boxes in the case and was allowed to set real type. By the time Sam Pickering noted the moving signs in Dave the boy was struggling with copy and winning his father's praise for his aptitude. True, he too often neglected to reach to the

upper case for capital letters, and the galley proofs of his takes were not as clean as they should have been, but he was learning. His father said so.

Every Wednesday he earned a real quarter by sitting against the wall back of the hand press and inking the forms while his father ran off the edition. This was better fun than typesetting. Before you was a long roller on two other long rollers, and at your right hand was a small roller with which you picked up ink from a stone, rolling it across and across with a spirited crackle; then you ran the small roller the length of the long roller; then you turned a crank that revolved the two lower rollers, thus distributing the ink evenly over the upper one. After that you ran the upper roller out over the two forms of type on the press bed.

Dave Cowan, across the press, the sleeves of his pink-striped shirt rolled to his elbows, then let down a frame in which he had fixed a virgin sheet of paper, ran the bed of the press back under a weighted shelf, and pulled a mighty lever to make the imprint. Wilbur had heard the phrase "power of the press." He conceived that this was what the phrase meant—this pulling of the lever. Surmounting the framework of the press was a bronze eagle with wings outspread for flight. His father told him, the first day of his service, that this bird would flap its wings and scream three times when the last paper was run off. This would be the signal for Terry Stamper, the devil, to go across to Vielhaber's and fetch a pail of beer. Wilbur had waited for this phenomenon, only to believe, after repeated disappointments, that it was one of his father's jokes, though it was true that Terry Stamper brought the beer, which was drunk by Dave and Terry and Sam Pickering. Sam had been folding the printed papers, while Terry Stamper operated a machine that left upon each the name of a subscriber, dropping them into a clothes basket, which he later conveyed to the post office. Wilbur enjoyed this work, running the long roller across the forms after each impression, spotting himself and his clothes with ink. After he had learned some more he

would be a printer's devil like Terry, and fetch the beer and run the job press and do other interesting things. There was a little thrill for him in knowing you could say devil in this connection without having people think you were using a bad word.

But Dave's time had come. He "yearned over the skyline, where the strange roads go down," though he put it more sharply to Sam Pickering one late afternoon:

"Well, Sam, I feel itchy-footed."

"I knew it," said Sam. "When are you leaving?"

"No train out till the six-fifty-eight."

And Sam knew he would be meaning the six-fifty-eight of that same day. He never meant the day after, or the day after that.

That evening Dave sauntered down to the depot, accompanied by his son. There was no strained air of expectancy about him, and no tedious management of bags. He might have been seeking merely the refreshment of watching the six-fifty-eight come in and go out, as did a dozen or so of the more leisured class of Newbern. When the train came he greeted the conductor by his Christian name, and chatted with his son until it started. Then he stepped casually aboard and surrendered himself to its will. He had wanted suddenly to go somewhere on a train, and now he was going. "Got to see a man in San Diego," he had told the boy. "I'll drop back some of these days."

"Maybe you'll see the gypsies again," said Wilbur a bit wistfully.

But he was not cast down by his father's going; that was a thing that happened or not, like bad weather. He had learned this about his father. And pretty soon, after he went to school a little more and learned to spell better, to use punctuation marks the way the copy said, and capital letters even if you did have to reach for them, he, too, could swing onto the smoking car of the six-fifty-eight—after she had really started—and go off where gypsies went, and people that had learned good loose trades.

There was a new printer at the case in the *Advance* office the following morning, one of those who constantly drifted in and out of that exciting nowhere into which they so lightly disappeared by whim; a gaunt, silent man, almost wholly deaf, who stood in Dave Cowan's place and set type with machine-like accuracy or distributed it with loose-fingered nimbleness, seizing many types at a time and scattering them to their boxes with the apparent abandon of a sower strewing seed. He, too, was but a transient, wherever he might be found, but he had no talk of the outland where gypsies were, and to Wilbur he proved to be of no human interest, so that the boy neglected the dusty office for the more attractive out-of-doors, though still inking the forms for the Wednesday edition, because a quarter is a good thing to have.

When Terry Stamper brought the pail of beer now the new printer drank abundantly of the frothy stuff, and for a time glowed gently with a suggestive radiance, as if he, too, were almost moved to tell of strange cities; but he never did. Nor did he talk instructively about the beginnings of life and how humans were but slightly advanced simians. He would continue to set type, silent and detached, until an evening when he would want to go somewhere on a train—and go. He did not smoke, but he chewed tobacco; and Wilbur, the apprentice, desiring to do all things that printers did, strove to emulate him in this interesting vice; but it proved to offer only the weakest of appeals, so he presently abandoned the effort—especially after Winona had detected him with the stuff in his mouth, striving to spit like an elderly printer. Winona was horrified. Smoking was bad enough!

Winona was even opposed to his becoming a printer. Those advantages of the craft extolled by Dave Cowan were precisely what Winona deemed undesirable. A boy should rather be studious and of good habits and learn to write a good hand so that he could become a bookkeeper, perhaps even in the First National Bank itself—and always stay in one place. Winona disapproved of gypsies and all their ways. Gypsies were rolling stones. She strove to entice the

better nature of Wilbur with moral placards bearing printed bits from the best authors. She gave him an entire calendar with an uplifting sentiment on each leaf. One paying proper attention could scarcely have lived the year of that calendar without being improved. Unfortunately, Wilbur Cowan never in the least cared to know what day in the month it was, and whole weeks of these homilies went unread. Winona was watchful, however, and fertile of resource. Aforetime she had devoted her efforts chiefly to Merle as being the better worth saving. Now that she had indeed saved him, made and uplifted him beyond human expectation, she redoubled her attentions to his less responsive, less plastic brother. Almost fiercely she was bent upon making him the moral perfectionist she had made Merle.

As one of the means to this end she regaled him often with tales of his brother's social and moral refulgence under his new name. The severance of Merle from his former environment had been complete. Not yet had he come back to see them. But Winona from church and Sunday-school brought weekly reports of his progress in the esteem of the family which he now adorned. Harvey D. Whipple was proud of his new son; had already come to feel a real fatherhood for him, and could deny him nothing. He was such a son as Harvey D. had hoped to have. Old Gideon Whipple, too, was proud of his new grandson. The stepmother, for whom Fate had been circumvented by this device of adoption, looked up to the boy and rejoiced in her roundabout motherhood, and Miss Murtree declared that he was a perfect little gentleman. Also, by her account, he was studious, with a natural fondness for the best in literature, and betrayed signs of an intellect such as, in her confidentially imparted opinion, the Whipple family, neither in root nor branch, had yet revealed. Patricia, the sister, had abandoned all intention of running away from home to obtain the right sort of companionship.

Winona meant to pique and inspire Wilbur to new endeavour with these tales, which, for a good purpose, she took

the liberty of embellishing where they seemed to invite it—as how the Whipples were often heard to wish that the other twin had been as good and well-mannered a boy as Merle—who did not use tobacco in any form—so they might have adopted him, too. Winona was perhaps never to understand that Wilbur could not picture himself as despised and rejected. His assertion that he had not wished to be adopted by any Whipples she put down to envious bravado. Had he not from afar on more than one occasion beheld his brother riding the prophesied pony? But he would have felt embarrassed at meeting his brother now face to face. He liked to see him at a distance, on the wonderful pony, or being driven in the cart with other Whipples, and he felt a great pride that he should have been thus exalted. But he was shyly determined to have no contact with this splendid being.

When school began in the fall he was again constrained to the halls of learning. He would have preferred not to go to school, finding the free outer life of superior interest; but he couldn't learn the good loose trade without improving his knowledge of the printed word—though he had not been warned that printers must be informed about fractions, or even long division—but Winona being his teacher it was impracticable to be absent on private affairs even for a day without annoying consequences.

During the long summer every day but Sunday had been a Saturday in all essentials; now, though the hillsides blazed with autumn colour, ripe nuts were dropping, the mornings sparkled a frosty invitation, and there was a provocative tang of brush fires in the keen air, he must earn his Saturdays, and might even of these earn but one in a long week. Sunday, to be sure, had the advantage of no school, but it had the disadvantage of church attendance, where one fell sleepy while the minister scolded; and Sunday afternoon, even if one might fare abroad, was clouded by reminders of the imminent Monday morning. It was rather a relief when snow came to shroud the affable woods, bringing such cold that one might as well be in a schoolroom as any place; when, as

Winona put down in her journal, the vale of Newbern was "locked in winter's icy embrace," and poor old Judge Penniman was compelled to while away the long forenoons with his feet on a stock of wood in the kitchen oven.

From Dave Cowan came picture postcards addressed to his son, gay-coloured scenes of street life or public buildings, and on these Dave had written, "Having a good time, hope you are the same." One of them portrayed a scene of revelry by night, and was entitled Sans Souci Dance Hall, Denver, Colorado. Winona bribed this away from the recipient with money. She wished Dave would use better judgment—choose the picture of some good church or a public library.

The Whipple family, including its latest recruit, continued remote. Wilbur would happily observe his one-time brother, muffled in robes of fur, glide swiftly past in a sleigh of curved beauty, drawn by horses that showered music along the roadway from a hundred golden bells, but there were no direct encounters save with old Sharon Whipple. Sharon, even before winter came, had formed a habit of stopping to speak to Wilbur, pulling up the long-striding, gaunt roan horse and the buggy which his weight caused to sag on one side to ask the boy idle questions. Throughout the winter he continued these attentions, and once, on a day sparkling with new snow, he took the rejected twin into a cutter, enveloped him in the buffalo robe, and gave him a joyous ride out over West Hill along the icy road that wound through the sleeping, still woods. They were silent for the most of this drive.

"You don't talk much," said Sharon when the roan slowed for the ascent of West Hill and the music of the bells became only a silver murmur of chords. The boy was silent, even at this, for while he was trying to think of a suitable answer, trying to think what Winona would have him reply, Sharon flicked the roan and the music came loud again. There was no more talk until Sharon pulled up in the village, the boy being too shy to volunteer any speech while this splendid hospitality endured.

"Have a good time?" demanded Sharon at parting.

Wilbur tried earnestly to remember that he should reply in Winona's formula, "I have had a delightful time and thank you so much for asking me," but he stared at Sharon, muffled in a great fur coat and cap, holding the taut lines with enormous driving gloves, and could only say "Fine!" after which he stopped, merely looking his thanks.

"Good!" said Sharon, and touching the outer tips of his frosted eyebrows with a huge gloved thumb he clicked to the roan and was off to a sprinkle of bell chimes.

Wilbur resolved not to tell Winona of this ride, because he would have to confess that he had awkwardly forgotten to say the proper words at the end. Merle would not have forgotten. Probably Mr. Sharon Whipple, having found him wanting in polish, would never speak to him again. But Sharon did, for a week later, when Wilbur passed him where he had stopped the cutter in River Street, the old man not only hailed him, but called him Buck. From his hearty manner of calling, "Hello, there, Buck!" it seemed that he had decided to overlook the past.

The advent of the following summer was marked by two events of importance; Mouser, the Penniman cat, after being repeatedly foiled throughout the winter, had gained access to the little house on a day when windows and doors were open for cleaning, stalked the immobile blue jay, and falling upon his prey had rent the choice bird limb from limb, scattering over a wide space wings, feathers, cotton, and twisted wire. Mouser had apparently found it beyond belief that so beautiful a bird should not be toothsome in any single part. But the discoverer of this sacrilege was not horrified as he would have been a year before. He had even the breadth of mind to feel an honest sympathy for poor Mouser, who had come upon arsenic where it could not by any known law of Nature have been apprehended, and who for two days remained beneath the woodshed sick unto death, and was not his old self for weeks thereafter. Wilbur was growing up.

Soon after this the other notable event transpired. Frank, the dog, became the proud but worried mother of five puppies, all multicoloured like himself. It is these ordeals that mature the soul, and it was an older Wilbur who went again to the *Advance* office to learn the loose trade, as his father had written him from New Orleans that he must be sure to do. He had increased his knowledge of convention in the use of capital letters, and that summer, as a day's work, he set up a column of leaded long primer which won him the difficult praise of Sam Pickering. Sam wrote a notice of the performance and printed it in the *Advance*—the budding craftsman feeling a double glow when he set this up, too. The item predicted that Wilbur Cowan, son of our fellow townsman, Dave Cowan, would soon become one of the swiftest of compositors.

This summer he not only inked the forms on Wednesday, but he was permitted to operate the job press. You stood before this and turned a large wheel at the left to start it, after which you kept it going with one foot on a treadle. Then rhythmically the press opened wide its maw and you took out the printed card or small bill and put in another before the jaws closed down. It was especially thrilling, because if you should keep your hand in there until the jaws closed you wouldn't have it any longer.

But there was disquieting news about the loose trade he intended to follow. A new printer brought this. He was the second since the deaf one of the year before, the latter on an hour's notice having taken the six-fifty-eight for Florida one night in early winter—like one of the idle rich, Sam Pickering said. The new printer, a sour, bald one of middle age, reported bitterly that hand composition was getting to be no good nowadays; you had to learn the linotype, a machine that was taking the bread out of the mouths of honest typesetters. He had beheld one of these heinous mechanisms operated in a city office—by a slip of a girl that wouldn't know how to hold a real stick in her hand—and things had come to a pretty pass. It was an intricate machine, with

thousands of parts, far more than seemed at all necessary. If you weren't right about machinery, and too old to learn new tricks, what were you going to do? Get sent to the printer's home, that was all! The new printer drank heavily to assuage his gloom, even to a degree that caused Herman Vielhaber to decline his custom, so that he must lean the gloomy hours away on the bar of Pegleg McCarron, where they didn't mind such things. Sam Pickering warned him that if this kept on there would no longer be jobs for hand compositors, even in country printing offices; that he, for one, would probably solve his own labour problem by installing a machine and running it himself. But the sad printer refused to be warned and went from bad to worse.

Wilbur Cowan partook of this pessimism about the craft, and wondered if his father had heard the news. If it had ceased to be important that a bright boy should set up a column of long primer, leaded, in a day, he might as well learn some other loose trade in which they couldn't invent a machine to take the bread out of your mouth. It was that summer he spent many forenoons on the steps of the ice wagon driven by his good friend, Bill Bardin. Bill said you made good-enough money delivering ice, and it was pleasant on a hot morning to rumble along the streets on the back steps of the covered wagon, cooled by the great blocks of ice still in its sawdust.

When they came to a house that took only twenty-five pounds Bill would let him carry it in with the tongs—unless it was one where Bill, a knightly person, chanced to sustain more or less social relations with the bondmaid. And you could chip off pieces of ice to hold in your mouth, or cool your bare feet in the cold wet sawdust; and you didn't have to be anywhere at a certain hour, but could just loaf along, giving people their ice when you happened to get there. He wondered, indeed, if delivering ice were not as loose a trade as typesetting had been, and whether his father would approve of it. It was pleasanter than sitting in a dusty printing office, and the smells were less obtrusive. Also,

Bill Bardin went about bareheaded and clad above the waist only in a sleeveless jersey that was tight across his broad chest and gave his big arms free play. He chewed tobacco, too, like a printer, but cautioned his young helper against this habit in early youth. He said if indulged in at too tender an age it turned your blood to water and you died in great suffering. Wilbur longed for the return of his father, so he could tell him about the typesetting machine and about this other good loose trade that had opened so opportunely.

And there were other trades—seemingly loose enough—in which one drove the most delightful wagons, and which endured the year round and not, as with the ice trade, merely for the summer. There was, for example, driving an express wagon. Afternoons, when the ice chests of Newbern had been replenished and Bill Bardin disappeared in the more obscure interests of his craft, Wilbur would often ride with Rufus Paulding, Newbern's express agent. Rufus drove one excellent horse to a smart green wagon, and brought packages from the depot, which he delivered about the town. Being a companionable sort, he was not averse to Wilbur Cowan's company on his cushioned seat. It was not as cool work as delivering ice, and lacked a certain dash of romance present in the other trade, but it was lively and interesting in its own way, especially when Rufus would remain on his seat and let him carry packages in to people with a book for them to sign.

And there was the dray, driven by Trimble Cushman, drawn by two proud black horses of great strength. This trade was a sort of elder, heavier brother of the express trade, conveying huge cases of merchandise from the freight depot to the shops of the town. Progress was slower here than with the express wagon, or even the ice wagon; you had to do lots of backing, with much stern calling to the big horses, and often it took a long time to ease the big boxes to the sidewalk—time and grunting exclamations. Still it was not unattractive to the dilettante, and he rode beside Trimble with profit to his knowledge of men and affairs.

But better than all, for a good loose trade involving the direction of horses, was driving the bus from the Mansion House to the depot. The majestic yellow vehicle with its cushioned, lavishly decorated interior, its thronelike seat above the world, was an exciting affair, even when it rested in the stable yard. When the horses were hitched to it, and Starling Tucker from the high seat with whip and reins directed its swift progress, with rattles and rumbles like a real circus wagon, it was thrilling indeed. This summer marked the first admission of Wilbur to an intimacy with the privileged driver which entitled him to mount dizzily to the high seat and rattle off to trains. He had patiently courted Starling Tucker in the office of the Mansion House livery stable, sitting by him in silent admiration while he discoursed learnedly of men and horses, helping to hitch up the dappled grays to the bus, fetching his whip, holding his gloves, until it became a matter of course that he should mount to the high seat with him.

This seemed really to be the best of all loose trades. On that high seat, one hand grasping an iron railing at the side, sitting by grim-faced Starling Tucker in his battered hat, who drove carelessly with one hand and tugged at his long red moustache with the other, it was pleasantly appalling to reflect that he might be at any moment dashed to pieces on the road below; to remember that Starling himself, the daily associate of horses and a man of high adventure, had once fallen from this very seat and broken bones—the most natural kind of accident, Starling averred, though gossip had blamed it on Pegleg McCarron's whisky. Not only was it delectable to ride in the high place, to watch trains come and go, to carry your load of travellers back to the Mansion House, but there were interludes of relaxation when you could sit about in the office of the stables and listen to agreeable talk from the choice spirits of abundant leisure, with whom work seemed to be a tribal taboo, daily assembled there. The flow of anecdote was often of a pungent quality, and the amateur learned some words and phrases that would

have caused Winona acute distress; but he learned about men and horses and dogs, and enlarged his knowledge of Newbern's inner life, having peculiar angles of his own upon it from his other contacts with its needs for ice and express packages and crates of bulkier merchandise.

His father had once said barbering was a good loose trade that enabled one to go freely about the world, but the boy had definitely eliminated this from the list of possible crafts, owing to unfortunate experiences with none other than Judge Penniman, for the judge cut his hair. At spaced intervals through the year Winona would give the order and the judge would complainingly make his preparations. The victim was taken to the woodshed and perched on a box which was set on a chair. The judge swathed him with one of Mrs. Penniman's aprons, crowding folds of it inside his neckband. Then with stern orders to hold his head still the rite was consummated with a pair of shears commandeered from plain and fancy dressmaking. Loath himself to begin the work, the judge always came to feel, as it progressed, a fussy pride in his artistry; a pride never in the least justified by results. To Wilbur, after these ordeals, his own mirrored head was a strange and fearsome apparition, the ears appearing to have been too carelessly affixed and the scanty remainder of his hair left in furrows, with pallid scalp showing through. And there were always hairs down his neck, despite the apron. Barbering was not for him—not when you could drive a bus to all trains, or even a dray.

There were also street encounters that summer with old Sharon Whipple, who called the boy Buck and jocularly asked him what he was doing to make a man of himself, and whom he would vote for at the next election. One sunny morning, while Wilbur on River Street weighed the possible attractions of the livery-stable office against the immediate certainty of some pleasant hours with Rufus Paulding, off to the depot to get a load of express packages for people, Sharon in his sagging buggy pulled up to the curb before him and told him

to jump in if he wanted a ride. So he had jumped in without further debate.

Sharon's plump figure was loosely clad in gray, and his whimsical eyes twinkled under a wide-brimmed hat of soft straw. He paused to light a cigar after the boy was at his side—the buggy continuing to sag as before—then he pushed up the ends of his eyebrows with the blunt thumb, clicked to the long-striding roan, and they were off at a telling trot. Out over West Hill they went, leaving a thick fog of summer dust in their wake, and on through cool woods to a ridge from which the valley opened, revealing a broad checkerboard of ripening grain fields.

"Got to make three of my farms," volunteered Sharon after a silent hour's drive.

"Yes, sir," said Wilbur, which seemed enough for them both until the first of the farms was reached.

Sharon there descended, passing the reins to a proud Wilbur, for talk with his tenant on the steps of the yellow frame farmhouse. Sharon bent his thick round leg to raise a foot to a rustic seat, and upon the cushion thus provided made figures in a notebook. After a time of this, while Wilbur excitingly held the roan horse, made nervous by a hive of bees against the whitewashed fence, he came back to the buggy—which sagged from habit even when disburdened of its owner—and they drove to another farm—a red brick farmhouse, this time, with yellow roses climbing its front. Here Sharon tarried longer in consultation. Wilbur staunchly held the roan, listened to the high-keyed drone of a reaper in a neighbouring field, and watched the old man make more figures in his black notebook. He liked this one of the Whipples pretty well. He was less talkative than Bill Bardin, and his speech was less picturesque than Starling Tucker's or even Trimble Cushman's, who would often threaten to do interesting and horrible things to his big dray horses when they didn't back properly; but Wilbur felt at ease with Sharon, even if he didn't say much or say it in startling words.

When Sharon had done his business the farmer came to

lead the roan to the barn, and Sharon, taking a pasteboard box from the back of the buggy, beckoned Wilbur to follow him. They went round the red farmhouse, along a grassy path carelessly bordered with flowers that grew as they would, and at the back came to a little white spring house in which were many pans of milk on shelves, and a big churn. The interior was cool and dim, and a stream of clear water trickled along a passage in the cement floor. They sat on a bench, and Sharon opened his box to produce an astonishing number of sandwiches wrapped in tissue paper, a generous oblong of yellow cheese, and some segments of brown cake splendidly enriched with raisins.

"Pitch in!" said Sharon.

"Yes, sir," said Wilbur, and did so with an admirable restraint, such as Winona would have applauded, nibbling politely at one of the sandwiches.

"Ain't you got your health?" demanded the observant Sharon, capably engulfing half a sandwich.

"Yes, sir," said Wilbur.

"Eat like it then."

So the boy became less conscious of his manners, and ate like it, to Sharon's apparent satisfaction. Midway in the destruction of the sandwiches the old man drew from the churn a tin cup of what proved to be buttermilk. His guest had not learned to like this, so for him he procured another cup, and brought it brimming with sweet milk which he had daringly taken from one of the many pans, quite as if he were at home in the place.

"Milk's good for you," said Sharon.

"Yes, sir," said Wilbur.

"A regular food, as much as anything you want to name."

"Yes, sir." The boy agreed wholly, without wishing to name anything in disparagement of milk.

They ate the sandwiches and cheese, and upon the guest was conferred the cake. There were three pieces, and he managed the first swiftly, but was compelled to linger on the second, even with the lubricating help of another cup of milk.

"Bring it along," directed the host. So it was brought along to the buggy, one piece in course of consumption and one carried to be eaten at superb leisure as the fed roan carried them down the hot road to still another farm.

They drove back to Newbern in the late afternoon, still largely silent, though there was a little talk at the close on stretches of hill where the roan would consent to slacken his pace.

"What you think of him?" Sharon demanded, nodding obliquely at the roan.

"He's got good hocks and feet—good head and shoulders, too," said the boy.

"He has that," affirmed Sharon. "Know horses?"

"Well, I——"

He faltered, but suddenly warmed to talk and betrayed an intimate knowledge of every prominent horse in Newbern. He knew Charley and Dick, the big dray horses; and Dexter, who drew the express wagon; he knew Bob and George, who hauled the ice wagon; he knew the driving horses in the Mansion stables by name and point, and especially the two dapple grays that drew the bus. Not for nothing had he listened to the wise talk in the stable office, or sat at the feet of Starling Tucker, who knew horses so well he called them hawses. It was the first time he had talked to Sharon forgetfully. Sharon nodded his head from time to time, and the boy presently became shy at the consciousness that he had talked a great deal.

Then Sharon spoke of rumours that the new horseless carriage would soon do away with horses. He didn't believe the rumours, and he spoke scornfully of the new machines as contraptions. Still he had seen some specimens in Buffalo, and they might have something in them. They might be used in time in place of horse-drawn busses and ice wagons and drays. Wilbur was chilled by this prediction. He had more than half meant to drive horses to one of these useful affairs, but what if they were to be run by machinery? Linotypes to spoil typesetting by hand, and now horseless

carriages to stop driving horses! He wondered if it would be any use to learn any trade. He would have liked to ask Sharon, but hardly dared.

"Well, it's an age of progress," said Sharon at last. "We got to expect changes."

Wilbur was at home on this topic. He became what Winona would have called informative.

"We can't stop change," he said in his father's manner. "First, there was star dust, and electricity or something made it into the earth; and some water and chemicals made life out of this electricity or something——"

"Hey?" said the startled Sharon, but the story of creation continued.

"And there was just little animals first, but they got to be bigger, because they had to change; and pretty soon they become monkeys, and then they changed some more, and stood up on their hind feet, and so they got to be human beings like us—because—because they had to change," he concluded, lucidly.

"My shining stars!" breathed Sharon.

"And they lost their tails and got so they would wear neckties and have post offices and depots and religions," added the historian in a final flash of memory.

"Well, I'll be switched!" said Sharon.

"It's electricity or something," explained the lecturer. "My father said so."

"Oh!" said Sharon.

"But he says there's a catch in it somewhere."

"I should think there was," said Sharon. "By gracious goodness, I should think there was a catch in it somewhere! But you understand the whole thing as easy as crack a nut, don't you?"

"Yes, sir," said Wilbur.

"Giddap there!" said Sharon.

Wilbur did not tell Winona of this day's encounter with an authentic Whipple. He would have done so but for the dollar that Sharon absently bestowed upon him from a

crumple of bills when he left the buggy at the entrance to Whipple Old Place. Winona, he instantly knew, would counsel him to save the dollar, and he did not wish to save it. As fast as his bare feet—with a stone bruise on one heel—would carry him he sped to Solly Gumble's. Yet not with wholly selfish intent. A section of plug tobacco, charmingly named Peach and Honey, was purchased for a quarter as a gift to Bill Bardin of the ice wagon. Another quarter secured three pale-brown cigars, with gay bands about their middles, to be lavished upon the hero, Starling Tucker.

CHAPTER IX

THE colourful years sped. At fifteen Wilbur Cowan, suddenly alive to this quick way of time, was looking back to the days of his heedless youth. That long aisle of years seemed unending, but it narrowed in perspective until earlier experiences were but queerly dissolving shapes, wavering of outline, dimly discerned, piquant or sad in the mind, but elusive when he would try to fix them.

On a shining, full-starred night he stood before the little house in the Penniman side yard and bade farewell to this youth. A long time he gazed into the arched splendour above. He had never noticed that the stars were so many and so bright; and they were always there, by day as well as by night, so his father said. Many of them, on the same veracious authority, were peopled; some with people who were yet but monkeys like the Vielhaber's Emil; some with people now come to be human like himself; others with ineffable beings who had progressed in measureless periods of time beyond any human development that even Dave Cowan could surmise.

The aging boy felt suddenly friendly with all those distant worlds, glad they were there, so almost sociably near. On more than one of them, perhaps far off in that white streak they called the Milky Way, there must be boys like himself, learning useful things about life, to read good books and all about machinery, and have good habits, and so forth. Surely on one of those far worlds there was at least one boy like himself, who was being a boy for the last time and would to-morrow be a man. For Wilbur Cowan, beneath this starry welter of creation—of worlds to be or in being, or lifeless hulks that had been worlds and were outworn—was

on this June night uplifted to face the parting of the ways. His last day had been lived as a boy with publicly bare feet.

No more would he feel the soft run of new grass beneath his soles, or longer need beware the chance nail or sharp stone in the way. On the morrow, presumably to be a day inviting to bare feet as had all the other days of his summers, remembered and forgotten, he would, when he rose, put on stockings and stout shoes; and he would put them on world without end through all the new mornings of his life, howsoever urgently with their clement airs they might solicit the older mode. It was a solemn thing to reflect upon, under a glittering heaven that held, or not, those who might feel with him the bigness of the moment. He suffered a vision of the new shoes, stiffly formidable, side by side at the foot of his bed in the little house. It left him feeling all his years.

And he would wear long trousers! With tolerant amusement he saw himself as of old, barefoot, bare-legged, the knee pants buttoned to the calico blouse. It was all over. He scanned the stars a last time, dimly feeling that the least curious of their inhabitants would be aware of this crisis.

Perhaps on one of those blinking orbs people with a proper concern for other world events would be saying to one another: "Yes, he's grown up now. Didn't you hear the big news? Why, to-morrow he's going to begin driving a truck for Trimble Cushman—got a job for the whole summer."

If the announcement startled less than great news should, the speaker could surely produce a sensation by adding: "The first automobile truck in Newbern Center."

And how had this immature being, capable out-of-doors boy though he was, come to be so exalted above his fellows? Sam Pickering's linotype had first revealed his gift for machinery. For Sam had installed a linotype, and Wilbur Cowan had patiently mastered its distracting intricacies. Dave Cowan had informally reappeared one day, still attired with decreasing elegance below the waist—his cloth-topped shoes but little more than distressing memories—and announced that he was now an able operator of this wondrous

machine; and the harried editor of the *Advance*, stung to enterprise by flitting wastrels who tarried at his case only long enough to learn the name of the next town, had sought relief in machinery, even if it did take bread from the mouths of honest typesetters. Their lack of preference as to where they earned there bread, their insouciant flights from town to town without notice, had made Sam brutal. He had ceased to care whether they had bread or not. So Dave for a summer had brought him surcease from help worries.

The cynical journeyman printer of the moment, on a day when Dave tried out the new machine, had stood by and said she might set type but she certainly couldn't justify it, because it took a human to do that, and how would a paper look with unevenly ending lines? When Dave, seated before the thing, proved that she uncannily could justify the lines of type before casting them in metal, the dismayed printer had shuddered at the mystery of it.

Dave Cowan seized the moment to point out to his admiring son and other bystanders that it was all the working of evolution. If you couldn't change when your environment demanded it Nature scrapped you. Hand compositors would have to learn to set type by machinery or go down in the struggle for existence. Survival of the fittest—that was it. The doubting printer was not there to profit by this lecture. Though it was but five o'clock, he was down on the depot platform moodily waiting for the six-fifty-eight.

The next number of the *Advance* was set by linotype, a circumstance of which one of its columns spoke feelingly, and set, moreover, in the presence of as many curious persons as could crowd about the operator. Among these none was so fascinated as Wilbur Cowan. He hung lovingly about the machine, his fingers itching to be at its parts. When work for the day was over he stayed by it until the light grew dim in the low-ceilinged, dusty office. He took liberties with its delicate structure that would have alarmed its proud owner, playing upon it with wrench and screw driver, detaching parts from the whole for the pure pleasure of putting

them back. He thus came to an intimate knowledge of the contrivance. He knew what made it go. He early mastered its mere operation. Sam Pickering felt fortified against the future.

Then it developed that though Dave Cowan could perform ably upon the instrument while it retained its health he was at a loss when it developed ailments; and to these it was prone, being a machine of temperament and airs, inclined to lose spirit, to sulk, even irritably to refuse all response to Dave's fingering of the keyboard. Dave was sincerely startled when his son one day skillfully restored tone to the thing after it had disconcertingly rebelled. Sam Pickering, on the point of wiring for the mechanic who had installed his treasure, looked upon the boy with awe as his sure hands wrought knowingly among the weirdest of its vitals. Dave was impressed to utter lack of speech, and resumed work upon the again compliant affair without comment. Perhaps he reflected that the stern processes of his favourite evolution demanded more knowledge of this machine than even he had acquired.

There ensued further profitable education for the young mechanic from the remarkable case of Sharon Whipple's first motor car. Sharon, the summer before, after stoutly affirming for two years that he would never have one of the noisy things on the place, even though the Whipple New Place now boasted two—boasting likewise of their speed and convenience—and even though Gideon Whipple jestingly called him a fossilized barnacle on the ship of progress, had secretly bought a motor car and secretly for three days taken instructions in its running from the city salesman who delivered it. His intention was to become daringly expert in its handling and flash upon the view of the discomfited Gideon, who had not yet driven a car. He would wheel carelessly up the drive to the Whipple New Place in apparently contemptuous mastery of the thing, and he would specifically deny ever having received any driving

lessons whatever, thus by falsehood overwhelming his brother with confusion.

In the stable, therefore, one afternoon he had taken his place at the wheel. Affecting a jovial ease of mind, he commanded the company of his stableman, Elihu Titus, on the seat beside him. He wished a little to show off to Elihu, but he wished even more to be not alone if something happened. With set jaws and a tight grip of the wheel he had backed from the stable, and was rendered nervous in the very beginning by the apparent mad resolve of the car to continue backing long after it was wished not to. Elihu Titus was also rendered nervous, and was safely on the ground before the car yielded to the invincible mass of a boxwood hedge that had been forty years in growing. Sharon pointed his eyebrows.

"It makes you feel like a helpless fool," he confided to his hireling.

"She's all right on this side," said Elihu Titus, cannily peering at the nether mechanism in pretense that he had left his seat to do just that.

The next start was happier in results. Down the broad driveway Sharon had piloted the monster, and through the wide gate, though in a sudden shuddering wonder if it were really wide enough for his mount; then he had driven acceptably if jerkily along back streets for an exciting hour. It wasn't so bad, except once when he met a load of hay and emerged with frayed nerves from the ordeal of passing it; and he had been compelled to drive a long way until he could find space in which to turn round. The smarty that had sold the thing to him had turned in a narrow road, but not again that day would Sharon employ the whimsically treacherous gear of the retrograde.

He came at last to a stretch of common that permitted a wide circle, and took this without mishap. A block farther along he had picked up the Cowan boy. He was not above prizing the admiration of this child for his mechanical genius. Wilbur exclaimed his delight at the car and lolled gingerly

upon its luxurious back seat. He was taken full into the grounds of the Whipple Old Place, because Sharon had suddenly conceived that he could not start the car again if he stopped it to let down his guest. The car entered the wide gateway, which again seemed dangerously narrow to its driver, and purred on up the gravelled drive. When half the distance to the haven of the stable had been covered it betrayed symptoms of some obscure distress, coughing poignantly. Sharon pretended not to notice this. A dozen yards beyond it coughed again, feebly, plaintively, then it expired. There could be no doubt of its utter extinction. All was over. The end had come suddenly, almost painlessly.

They got out and blankly eyed the lifeless hulk. After a moment of this, which was fruitless, Sharon spoke his mind concerning the car. For all the trepidation it had caused him, the doubts and fears and panics, he took his revenge in words of biting acidity—and he was through with the thing.

"Let's get it out of sight," he said at last, and the three of them pushed it on along the drive to the shelter of the stable.

Elihu Titus then breathed a long sigh and went silently to curry a horse in a neighbouring box stall. He knew when to talk and when not to. But Wilbur Cowan, wishing motor cars were in build more like linotypes, fearlessly opened the hood.

"My shining stars!" murmured Sharon at this his first view of his car's more intimate devices. "She's got innards like a human, ain't she?" He instantly beheld a vision of the man in the front of the almanac whose envelope is neatly drawn back to reveal his complicated structure in behalf of the zodiacal symbols. "It's downright gruesome," he added. But his guest was viewing the neat complexities of metal with real pleasure and with what seemed to the car's owner a practiced and knowing eye.

"Understand 'em?" demanded Sharon.

The boy hesitated. What he wished more than anything

was freedom to take the thing apart, all that charming assemblage of still warm metal and pipes and wires. He wanted to know what was inside of things, what made them go, and—to be sure—what had made them stop.

"Well, I could if I had a chance," he said at last.

"You got it," said Sharon. "Spend all your born days on the old cadaver if you're so minded." Already to Sharon it was an old car. He turned away from the ghastly sight, but stopped for a final warning: "But don't you ever tell anybody. I ain't wanting this to get out on me."

"No, sir," said Wilbur.

"Maybe we ought to——" began Sharon, but broke off his speech with a hearty cough. He was embarrassed, because he had been on the point of suggesting that they call Doc Mumford. Doc Mumford was the veterinary. The old man withdrew. Elihu Titus appeared dimly in the background.

"Ain't she one gosh-awful crazy hellion?" he called softly to Wilbur, and returned to the horse, whose mechanism was understandable.

The boy was left sole physician to the ailing monster. He drew a long breath of gloating and fell upon it. For three days he lived in grimed, greased, and oiled ecstasy, appeasing that sharp curiosity to know what was inside of things. The first day he took down the engine bit by bit. The clean-swept floor about the dismantled hulk was a spreading turmoil of parts. Sharon, on cool afterthought, had conceived that his purchase might not have suffered beyond repair, but returning to survey the wreck, had thrown up his fat hands in a gesture of hopeless finality.

"That does settle it," he murmured. He pointed to the scattered members. "How in time did you ever find all them fiddlements in that little space?" Of course no one could ever put them back.

He picked up the book that had come with the car, a book falsely pretending to elucidate its mechanism, even to minor intelligences. The book was profuse in diagrams, and each

diagram was profuse in letters of the alphabet, but these he found uninforming. For the maker of the car had unaccountably neglected to put A, B, or C on the parts themselves, which rendered the diagrams but maddening puzzles. He threw down the book, to watch the absorbed young mechanic who was frankly puzzled but still hopeful.

"It's an autopsy," said Sharon. He fled again, in the buggy drawn by the roan. "A fool and his money!" he called from the sagging seat.

The second day passed with the parts still spread about the floor. Elihu Titus told Sharon the boy was only playing with them. Sharon said he was glad they could furnish amusement, and mentally composed the beginning of what would be a letter of withering denunciation to the car's maker.

But the third day the parts were unaccountably reassembled. Elihu Titus admitted that every one of them was put back, though he hinted they were probably by no means where they had been. But Sharon, coming again to the dissecting room at the day's end, was stricken with awe for the astounding genius that had put back all those parts. He felt a gleam of hope.

"She'd ought to go now," said the proud mechanic.

"You ought to know," said Sharon. "You been plumb into her gizzard."

"Only other thing I can think of," continued the mechanic, "mebbe she needs more of that gasoline stuff." He raised the cushion of the front seat and unscrewed a cap. "We might try that," he suggested, brightly. "This tank looks like she's empty."

"Try it," said Sharon, and the incredulous Elihu Titus was dispatched to the village for a five-gallon tin of the gasoline stuff. Elihu was incredulous, because in Newbern gasoline was until now something that women cleaned white gloves with. But when the tank was replenished the car came again to life, throbbing buoyantly.

"I'll be switched!" said Sharon.

A day later he was telling that his new car had broke down on him, but Buck Cowan had taken her all apart and found out the trouble in no time, and put her gizzard and lights and liver back as good as new. And Buck Cowan himself came to feel quite unjustifiably a creator's pride in the car. It was only his due that Sharon should let him operate it; perhaps natural that Sharon should prefer him to. Sharon himself was never to become an accomplished chauffeur. He couldn't learn to relax at the wheel.

So it was that the boy was tossed to public eminence on a day when Starling Tucker, accomplished horseman, descended into the vale of ignominy by means of the Mansion House's new motor bus. Starling had permitted the selling agents to instruct him briefly in the operation of the new bus, though with lordly condescension, for it was his conviction that a man who could tame wild horses and drive anything that wore hair could by no means fail to guide a bit of machinery that wouldn't r'ar and run even if a newspaper blew across its face. He mounted the seat, on his first essay alone, with the jauntiness becoming a master of vehicular propulsion. There may have been in his secret heart a bit of trepidation, now that the instructor was not there. In fact, one of the assembled villagers who closely observed his demeanour related afterward that Star's face was froze and that he had hooked onto the wheel like he was choking it to death. But the shining structure had glided off toward the depot, its driver's head rigid, his glance strained upon the road's centre. As it moved away Wilbur Cowan leaped to the rear steps and was carried with it. He had almost asked Starling Tucker for the privilege of a seat beside him, but the occasion was really too great.

Five blocks down Geneseo Street Starling had turned out to permit the passing of Trimble Cushman's loaded dray —and he had inexplicably, terribly, kept on turning out when there was no longer need for it. Frozen with horror, helpless in the fell clutch of circumstance, he sat inert and beheld himself guide the new bus over the sidewalk and through the

neat white picket fence of the Dodwell place. It demolished one entire panel of this, made deep progress over a stretch of soft lawn, and came at last—after threatening a lawless invasion of the sanctity of domicile—to a grinding stop in a circular bed of pansies that would never be the same again. There was commotion within the bus. Wild-eyed faces peered from the polished windows. A second later, in the speech of a bystander, "she was sweating passengers at every pore!"

Then came a full-throated scream of terror from the menaced house, and there in the doorway, clad in a bed gown, but erect and defiant, was the person of long-bedridden Grandma Dodwell herself. She brandished her lace cap at Starling Tucker and threatened to have him in jail if there was any law left in the land. Excited citizens gathered to the scene, for the picket fence had not succumbed without protest, and the crash had carried well. Even more than at the plight of Starling, they marvelled at the miracle that had been wrought upon the aged sufferer—her that hadn't put foot to floor in twenty years. There were outcries of alarm and amazement, hasty suggestions, orders to Starling Tucker to do many things he was beyond doing; but above them all rose clear-toned, vigorous denunciation from the outraged owner of the late pansy bed, who now issued from the doorway, walked unsupported down the neat steps, and started with firm strides for the offender. Starling Tucker beheld her approach, and to him, as to others there assembled, it was as if the dead walked. He climbed swiftly down upon the opposite side of his juggernaut, pushed a silent way through the crowd, and strode rapidly back to town. Starling's walk had commonly been a loose-jointed swagger, his head up in challenge, as befitted a hero of manifold adventure with wild horses. He now walked head down with no swagger.

But the crowd ceased to regard him, for now a slight boyish figure—none other than that of Wilbur Cowan—leaped to the seat, performed swift motions, grasped the

fateful wheel, and made the bus roar. The smell of burned gasoline affronted the pretty garden. Wheels revolved savagely among the bruised roots of innocent pansies. Grandma Dodwell screamed anew. Then slowly, implacably hesitant, ponderous but determined, the huge bus backed along the track it had so cruelly worn in the sward—out through the gap in the fair fence, over the sidewalk and into the road, rocking perilously, but settling level at last. Thereupon the young hero had done something else with mysterious handles, and the bus glided swiftly on to the depot, making the twelve-two in ample time.

Great moments are vouchsafed only to those souls fortified to survive them. To one who had tamed the proud spirit of Sharon Whipple's hellion it was but lightsome child's play to guide this honest and amiable new bus. To the Mansion he returned in triumph with a load of passengers, driving with zest, and there receiving from villagers inflamed by tales of his prowess an ovation that embarrassed him with its heartiness. He hastened to remove the refulgent edifice, steering it prudently to its station in the stable yard. Then he went to find the defeated Starling Tucker. That stricken veteran sat alone amid the ruins of his toppled empire in the little office, slumped and torpid before the cold, rusty stove. He refused to be comforted by his devotee. He said he would never touch one of them things again, not for no man's money. The Darwinian hypothesis allows for no petty tact in the process of evolution. Starling Tucker was unfit to survive into the new age. Unable to adapt himself, he would see the Mansion's stable become a noisome garage, while he performed humble and gradually dwindling service to a few remaining horses.

Wilbur Cowan guided the Mansion's bus for two days. He longed for it as a life work, but school was on and he was not permitted to abandon this, even for a glorious life at the wheel. There came a youth in neat uniform to perform this service—described by Starling Tucker as a young squirt that wouldn't know one end of a hawse from the other. Only on

Saturdays—on Saturdays openly and clandestinely on Sundays—was there present on the driver's seat a knowing amateur who could have sat there every day but for having unreasonably to learn about compound fractions and geography.

CHAPTER X

NOW school was over for another summer and Trimble Cushman's dray could be driven at a good wage—by a boy overnight become a man. There were still carpers who would regard him as a menace to life and limb. Judge Penniman was among these. A large truck in sole charge of a boy—still in his teens, as the judge put it—was not conducive to public tranquillity. But this element was speedily silenced. The immature Wilbur drove the thing acceptably, though requiring help on the larger boxes of merchandise, and Trimble Cushman, still driving horses on his other truck, was proud of his employee. Moreover, the boy became in high repute for his knowledge of the inner mysteries of these new mechanisms. New cars appeared in Newbern every day now, and many of them, developing ailments of a character more or less alarming to their purchasers, were brought to his distinguished notice with results almost uniformly gratifying. He was looked up to, consulted as a specialist, sent for to minister to distant roadside failures, called in the night, respected and rewarded.

It was a new Newbern through whose thoroughfares the new motor truck of Trimble Cushman was so expertly propelled. Farm horses still professed the utmost dismay at sight of vehicles drawn by invisible horses, and their owners often sought to block industrial progress by agitation for a law against these things, but progress was triumphant. The chamber of commerce recorded immense gains in population. New factories and mills had gone up beside the little river. New people were on the streets or living in their new houses. New merchants came to meet the new demand for goods.

The homy little town was putting on airs of a great city. There was already a Better Newbern club. The view down River Street from its junction with State, Masonic Hall on the left and the new five-story Whipple block on the right, as preserved on the picture postcards sold by the Cut-Rate Pharmacy, impressed all purchasers with the town's vitality. The *Advance* appeared twice a week, outdoing its rival, the *Star*, by one issue; and Sam Pickering, ever in the van of progress, was busy with plans for making his journal a daily.

Newbern was coming on, even as boys were coming on from bare feet to shoes on week-days. Ever and again there were traffic jams on River Street, a weaving turmoil of farmers' wagons, buggies, delivery carts, about a noisy, fuming centre of motor vehicles. High in the centre would be the motor truck of Trimble Cushman, loaded with cases and nursed through the muddle by a cool, clear-eyed youth, who sat with delicate, sure hands on a potent wheel. Never did he kill or maim either citizen or child, to the secret chagrin of Judge Penniman. Traffic jams to him were a part of the day's work.

When he had performed for a little time this skilled labour for Trimble Cushman it was brought to him one day that he was old indeed. For he observed, delivering a box to Rapp Brothers, jewellery, that from the sidewalk before that establishment he was being courted by a small boy; a shy boy with bare feet and freckles who permanently exposed two front teeth, and who followed the truck to the next place of delivery. Here, when certain boxes had been left, he seated himself, as if absentmindedly, upon the remote rear of the truck and was borne to another stopping place. The truck's driver glanced back savagely at him, but not too savagely; then pretended to ignore him.

The newcomer for an hour hung to the truck leechlike, without winning further recognition. Then by insensible gradations, by standing on the truck bed as it moved, by edging forward toward the high seat, by silently helping with a weighty box, it seemed he had acquired the right to mount

to the high seat of honour itself. He did this without spoken words, yet with an ingratiating manner. It was a manner that had been used, ages back, by the lordly driver of the present truck, when he had formed alliances with drivers of horse-drawn vehicles. He recognized it as such and turned to regard the courtier with feigned austerity.

"Hello, kid!" he said, with permitting severity. But secretly he rejoiced. Now he was really old.

Winona viewed the latest avocation of her charge with little enthusiasm. It compelled a certain measure of her difficult respect, especially when she beheld him worm his truck through crowded River Street with a supreme disregard for the imminent catastrophe—which somehow never ensued. But it lacked gentility. At twenty-eight Winona was not only perfected in the grammar of morals, more than ever alert for infractions of the merely social code, but her ideals of refinement and elegance had become more demanding. She would have had the boy engage in a pursuit that would require clean hands and smart apparel and bring him in contact with people of the right sort. She stubbornly held out to him the shining possibility that he might one day rise to the pinnacle of a clerical post in the First National Bank.

True, he had never betrayed the faintest promise of qualifying for this eminence, and his freely voiced preferences sweepingly excluded it from the catalogue of occupations in which he might consent to engage. But Winona was now studying doctrines that put all power in the heart's desire. Out of the infinite your own would come to you if you held the thought, and she serenely held the better thought for Wilbur, even in the moment of mechanical triumphs that brimmed his own cup of desire. She willed him to prefer choicer characters than the roughs he consorted with, to aspire to genteel occupation that would not send him back at the day's end grimed, reeking with low odours, and far too hungry.

His exigent appetite, indeed, alarmed her beyond measure,

because he cried out for meat, whereas Winona's new books said that meat eaters could hope for little reward of the spirit. A few simple vegetables, fruits, and nuts—these permitted the soul to expand, to attain harmony with the infinite, until one came to choose only the best among ideals and human associates. But she learned that she must in this case compromise, for a boy demanding meat would get it in one place if not another. If not at the guarded Penniman table, then at the low resort next to Pegleg McCarron's of one T-bone Tommy, where they commonly devoured the carcasses of murdered beasts and made no secret of it.

He even rebelled at fabrications, highly extolled in the gospel of clean eating, which were meant to placate the baser minded by their resemblances to meat—things like nut turkey and mock veal loaf and leguminous chicken and synthetic beefsteak cooked in pure vegetable oils. These he scorned the more bitterly for their false pretense, demanding plain meat and a lot of it. The nations cited by Winona that had thrived and grown strong on the produce of the fields left him unimpressed. He merely said, goaded to harshness, that he was not going to be a Chinese laundryman for any one.

Of what avail to read the lyrics of a great Hindu vegetarian poet to this undeveloped being? Still Winona laboured unceasingly to bring light to the dark place. Teaching a public school for eight years had developed a substratum of granite determination in her character. She would never quit. She was still to the outer eye the slight, brown Winona of twenty—perky, birdlike, with the quick trimness of a winging swallow, a little sharper featured perhaps, but superior in acuteness of desire and persistence, and with some furtive, irresponsible girlishness lurking timorously back in her bright glance.

She still secretly relished the jesting address of Dave Cowan, when at long intervals he lingered in Newbern from cross-country flights. It thrilled her naughtily to be addressed as La Marquise, to be accused of goings-on at the

court of Louis XVIII, about which the less said the better. She had never brought herself to wear the tan silk stockings of invidious allure, and she still confined herself to her mother's plainest dressmaking, yearning secretly for the fancy kind, but never with enough daring. Lyman Teaford still came of an evening to play his flute acceptably, while Winona accompanied him in many an amorous morceau. Lyman, in the speech of Newbern, had for eight years been going with Winona. But as the romantically impatient and sometimes a bit snappish Mrs. Penniman would say, he had never gone far.

Winona rejoiced a year later when golf promised, at least for a summer, to snatch Wilbur Cowan from the grimy indistinction of a mechanic's career. For thriving and aspiring Newbern had eased one of its growing pains with a veritable golf course, and the whilom machinery enthusiast became smitten with this strange new sport. Winona rejoiced, because it would bring him into contact with people of the better sort, for of course only these played the game. Her charge, it is true, engaged in the sport as a business, and not as one seeking recreation, but the desired social contact was indubitable. To carry over the course a bag or two of clubs for the elect of Newbern was bound to be improving.

And it was true that he now consorted daily through a profitable summer with people who had heretofore been but names to him. But Winona had neglected to observe that he would meet them not as a social equal but as a hireling. This was excusable in her, because she had only the vaguest notions of golf or of the interrelations between caddie and player. One informed in the ways of the sport could have warned her that caddies inevitably become cynical toward all people of the sort one cares to meet. Compelled by a rigid etiquette to silent, unemotional formality, they boil interiorly with contempt for people of the better sort, not only because their golf is usually atrocious—such as every caddie brilliantly surpasses in his leisure moments—but because

the speech provoked by their inveterate failures is commonly all too human.

So the results of Wilbur Cowan's contact with people Winona would approve, enduring for a mercifully brief summer and autumn, were not what Winona had fondly preconceived. He had first been attracted to the course—a sweet course, said the golf-architect who had laid it out over the rolling land south of town—by the personality of one John Knox McTavish, an earnest Scotchman of youngish middle age, procured from afar to tell the beginning golfers of Newbern to keep their heads down and follow through and not to press the ball. As John spoke, it was "Don't pr-r-r-r-ess th' ball." He had been chosen from among other candidates because of his accent. He richly endowed his words with r's, making more than one grow where only one had grown before. It was this vocal burriness that drew the facile notice of Wilbur. He delighted to hear John McTavish talk, and hung about the new clubhouse, apparently without purpose, until John not only sanctioned but besought his presence, calling him Laddie and luring him with tales of the monstrous gains amassed by competent caddies.

The boy lingered, though from motives other than mercenary. His cup was full when he could hear John's masterful voice addressed to Mrs. Rapp, Junior, or another aspirant.

"R-r-remember, mum, th' ar-r-r-um close, th' head down—and don't pr-r-r-ress th' ball."

Yet he was presently allured by a charm even more imperious, the charm of the game itself. For John at odd moments would teach him the use of those strange weapons, so that he had the double thrill of standing under the torrential r's addressed to himself and of feeling the sharp, clean impact of the club head upon a ball that flew a surprising distance. His obedient young muscles soon conformed to the few master laws of the game. He kept down, followed through and forebore, against all human instinct, to press the ball.

By the end of Newbern's golfing season he was able to do

almost unerringly what so many of Newbern's better sort did erratically and at intervals. And the talk of John Knox McTavish about the wealth accruing to alert caddies had proved to be not all fanciful. In addition to the stipend earned for conventional work, there were lost balls in abundance to be salvaged and resold.

"Laddie," said John McTavish, "if I but had the lost-ball pur-r-rivilege of yon sweet courr-r-se and could insu-r-r-e deliver-r-r-y!"

For the better sort of Newbern, despite conscientious warnings for which they paid John McTavish huge sums, would insist upon pressing the ball in the face of constant proof that thus treated it would slice into the rough to cuddle obscurely at the roots of tall grass.

Wilbur Cowan became a shrewd hunter and a successful merchandiser of golf balls but slightly used. Newbern's better sort denounced the scandal of this, but bought of him clandestinely, for even in that far day, when golf balls in price were yet within reach of the common people, few of them liked to buy a new ball and watch it vanish forever after one brilliant drive that would have taken it far down the fairway except for the unaccountable slice.

On the whole his season was more profitable than that of the year before, when he had nursed the truck of Trimble Cushman through the traffic jams of River Street, and he was learning more about the world of men if less about gas engines. Especially did the new sport put him into closer contact with old Sharon Whipple. Having first denounced the golf project as a criminal waste of one hundred and seventy-five acres of prime arable land, Sharon had loitered about the scene of the crime to watch the offenders make a certain kind of fools of themselves. From the white bench back of the first tee this cynic would rejoice mirthfully at topped or sliced drives or the wild swing that spends all its vicious intent upon the imponderable air. His presence came to be a trial to beginning players, who took no real

pleasure in the game until they reached the second tee, beyond the ken of the scoffer.

But this was perilous sport for Sharon Whipple. Day after day, looking into the whirlpool, he was—in a moment of madness—himself to leap over the brink. On an afternoon had come his brother Gideon and Rapp, Senior, elated pupils of John McTavish, to play sportingly for half a ball a hole. They ignored certain preliminary and all-too-pointed comments of the watcher. They strode gallantly to the tee in turn and exhibited the admirable form taught them by John. They took perfect practice swings. They addressed the ball ceremoniously, waggled the club at it, first soothingly, then with distinct menace, looked up to frown at a spot far down the fairway, looked back, exhaled the breath, and drove. Rapp, Senior, sliced into the rough. Gideon Whipple hooked into the rough.

Sharon Whipple mocked them injuriously. His ironic shouts attracted the notice of arriving players. Gideon Whipple stayed placid, smiling grimly, but Rapp, Senior, was nettled to retort.

"Mebbe you could do a whole lot better!" he called to Sharon in tones unnecessarily loud.

Sharon's reply, in a voice eminently soothing and by that calculated further to irritate the novice, was in effect that Rapp, Senior, might safely wager his available assets that Sharon Whipple could do better.

"Well, come on and do it then if you're so smart!" urged Rapp, Senior. "Come on, once—I dare you!"

Sharon scorned—but rather weakly—the invitation. Secretly, through his hostile study of the game, he had convinced himself that he by divine right could do perfectly what these people did so clumsily. Again and again his hands had itched for the club as he watched futile drives. He knew he could hit the ball. He couldn't help hitting it, stuck up the way it was on a pinch of sand—stuck up like a sore thumb. How did they miss it time after time? He had meant to test his conviction in solitude, but why not

put it to trial now, and shame this doubting and inept Rapp, Senior?

"Oh, well, I don't mind," he said, and waddled negligently to the tee.

Rapp, Senior, voiced loud delight. Gideon Whipple merely stood safely back without comment, though there was a malicious waiting gleam in his eyes.

"You folks make something out of nothing," scolded Sharon, fussily.

Grasping the proffered club he severely threatened with it the new ball which Rapp, Senior, had obligingly teed up for him. In that moment he felt a quick strange fear, little twinges of doubt, a suspicion that all was not well. Perhaps the sudden hush of those about him conduced to this. Even newly arrived players in the background waited in silence. Then he recovered his confidence. There was the ball and there was the club—it was easy, wasn't it? Make a mountain out of a mole hill, would they? He'd show them!

Amid the hanging silence—like a portent it overhung him—he raised the strange weapon and brought it gruntingly down with all the strength of his stout muscles.

In the fading light of seven o'clock on that fair summer's evening John McTavish for the hundredth time seized the heavy arms of Sharon Whipple and bent them back and up in the right line. Then Sharon did the thing faithfully in his own way, which was still, after an hour's trial, not the way of John McTavish.

"Mon, what have I told ye?" expostulated John. He had quit calling Sharon Sir-r-r. Perhaps his r's were tired, and anyway, Sharon called him Sandy, being unable to believe that any Scotchman would not have this for one or another of his names. "Again I tell ye, th' body must bend between th' hips an' th' neck, but ye keep jer-r-rkin' the head to look up."

"But, Sandy, I've sprained my back trying to bend from the hips," protested the plaintive Sharon.

"Yer-r-r old car-r-r-cass is musclebound, to be sur-r-e," conceded John. "You can't hope to bend it the way yon laddie does." He pointed to Wilbur Cowan, who had been retrieving balls—from no great distance—hit out by the neophyte.

"Can he do it?" questioned Sharon.

"Show 'um!" ordered John.

And Wilbur Cowan, coming up for the driver, lithely bent to send three balls successively where good golf players should always send them. Sharon blinked at this performance, admiring, envious, and again hopeful. If a child could do this thing——

"Well, I ain't giving up," he declared. "I'll show some people before I'm through."

He paused, hearing again in his shamed ears the ironic laughter of Rapp, Senior, at the three wild swings he had made before—in an excess of caution—he had struck the ground back of the immune ball and raked it a pitiful five feet to one side. He heard, too, the pleased laughter in the background, high, musical peals of tactless women and the full-throated roars of brutal men. He felt again the hot flush on his cheeks as he had slunk from the dreadful scene with a shamed effort to brazen it out, followed by the amused stare of Gideon Whipple. And he had slunk back when the course was cleared, to be told the simple secret of hitting a golf ball. He would condescend to that for the sake, on a near day, of publicly humiliating a certain vainglorious jewellery dealer. But apparently now, while the secret was simple enough to tell—it took John McTavish hardly a score of burry words to tell it all—it was less simple to demonstrate. It might take him three or even four days.

"Ye've done gr-r-rand f'r-r a beginnerr-r," said John McTavish, wearily, perfunctorily.

"I'll tell you," said Sharon. "I ain't wanting this to get out on me, that I come sneaking back here to have you teach me the silly game."

"Mon, mon!" protested the hurt McTavish.

"So why can't Buck here come up and teach me in private? There's open space back of the stables."

"Ye cud do wor-r-rse," said John. "And yer-r-r full hour-r-'s lesson now will be two dollar-r-rs."

"Certainly, McTavish," said Sharon, concealing his amazement. He could no longer address as Sandy one who earned two dollars as lightly as this.

There was a spacious opening back of the stable on the Whipple Old Place—space and the seclusion which Sharon Whipple considered imperative. Even Elihu Titus was sent about his business when he came to observe; threatened with an instant place in the ranks of the unemployed if he so much as breathed of the secret lessons to a town now said to be composed of snickering busybodies. The open space immediately back of the stable gave on wider spaces of pasture and wood lot.

CHAPTER XI

ARCHÆOLOGISTS of a future age will doubtless, in their minute explorations of this region, come upon the petrified remains of golf balls in such number as will occasion learned dispute. Found so profusely and yet so far from any known course, they will perhaps give rise to wholly erroneous surmises. Prefacing his paper with a reference to lost secrets once possessed by other ancients, citing without doubt that the old Egyptians knew how to temper the soft metal of copper, a certain scientist will profoundly deduce from this deposit of balls, far from the vestiges of the nearest course, that people of this remote day possessed the secret of driving a golf ball three and a half miles, and he will perhaps moralize upon the degeneracy of his own times, when the longest drive will doubtless not exceed a scant mile.

For three days Sharon sprayed out over the landscape, into ideal golf-ball covert, where many forever eluded even the keen eyes of Wilbur Cowan, one hundred balls originally purchased by the selecter golfing set of Newbern. Hereupon he refused longer to regard the wooden driver as a possible instrument of precision, and forever renounced it. Elihu Titus heard him renounce it balefully in the harness room one late afternoon, and later entering that apartment found the fragments of a shattered driver.

It remained for Wilbur Cowan to bring Sharon into the game by another avenue. A new campaign was entered upon, doubtfully at first by Sharon, at length with dawning confidence. He was never to touch a wooden club. He was to drive with an iron, not far, but truly; to stay always in the centre of the fairway and especially to cultivate the shorter approach shots and the use of the putter. The boy laboured

patiently with his pupil, striving to persuade him that golf was more than a trial of strength. From secret lessons back of the stable they came at length to furtive lessons over the course at hours when it was least played. John Knox McTavish figured at these times as consulting expert.

"It's th' shor-r-t game that tells th' stor-r-r-y," said John; and Sharon, making his whole game a short game, was presently telling the story understandably, to the vast pride of the middle man who provided endless balls for his lessons.

It was a day of thrills for them both when Rapp, Senior, publicly challenged and accepting with dreams of an easy conquest, bent down before the craft of Sharon Whipple. Sharon, with his competent iron in a short half-arm swing—he could not, he said, trust the utensil beyond the tail of his eye—sent the ball eighteen times not far but straight, and with other iron shots coaxed it to the green, where he sank it with quite respectable putting. Rapp, Senior, sliced his long drives brilliantly into shaded grassy dells and scented forest glades, where he trampled scores of pretty wild flowers as he chopped his way out again. Rapp, Senior, made the course excitingly in one hundred and thirty-eight; Sharon Whipple, playing along safe and sane lines, came through with one hundred and thirty-five, and was a proud man, and looked it, and was still so much prouder than he looked that he shuddered lest it get out on him. Later he vanquished, by the same tactics, other men who used the wooden driver with perfect form in practice swings.

Contests in which he engaged, however, were likely to be marred by regrettable asperities rising from Sharon's inability to grasp the nicer subtleties of golf. It seemed silly to him not to lift his ball out of some slight depression into which it had rolled quite by accident; not to amend an unhappy lie in a sand trap; and he never came to believe that a wild swing leaving the ball untouched should be counted as a stroke. People who pettishly insisted upon these extremes of the game he sneeringly called golf lawyers. When he said

that he made a hole in nine, he meant nine or thereabouts—approximately nine; nice people, he thought, should let it go at that. So he became feared on the course, not only for his actual prowess but for his matchless optimism in casting up his score. He was a pleased man, and considered golf a good game; and he never forgot that Wilbur Cowan had made him the golfer he was. More than ever was he believing that Harvey D. Whipple had chosen wrongly from available Cowans. On the day when he first made the Newbern course in, approximately, one hundred and twenty—those short-arm iron shots were beginning to lengthen down the centre of the fairway—he was sure of it.

It must be said that Sharon was alone in this conviction. The others most concerned, had he allowed it to be known, would have been amazed by it—Winona Penniman most of all. Winona's conviction was that the rejected Cowan twin conspicuously lacked those qualities that would make him desirable for adoption by any family of note, certainly not by Whipples. He had gone from bad to worse. Driving a truck had been bad. There had been something to say in its favour in the early stages of his career, until the neophyte had actually chosen to wear overalls like any common driver. In overalls he could not be mistaken for a gentleman amateur moved by a keen love for the sport of truck driving—and golf was worse. Glad at first of this change in his life work, Winona had been shocked to learn that golf kept people from the churches. And the clothes, even if they did not include overalls, were not genteel. Wilbur wore belted trousers of no distinction, rubber-soled sneakers of a neutral tint, and a sweater now so low in tone that the precise intention of its original shade was no longer to be divined. A rowdyish cap completed the uniform. No competent bank president, surveying the ensemble, would have for a moment considered making a bookkeeper out of the wearer. He was farther than ever before, Winona thought, from a career of Christian gentility in which garments of a

Sabbath grandeur are worn every day and proper care may be taken of the hands.

It was late in this summer that she enforced briefly a demand for genteel raiment, and kept the boy up until ten-thirty of a sleepy evening to manicure his nails. The occasion was nothing less than the sixteenth birthday of Merle Whipple, to be celebrated by an afternoon festivity on the grounds of his home. The brothers had met briefly and casually during Merle's years as a Whipple; but this was to be an affair of ceremony, and Winona was determined that the unworthy twin should—at least briefly—appear as one not socially impossible.

She browbeat him into buying a suit such as those that are worn by jaunty youths in advertisements, including haberdashery of supreme elegance, the first patent-leather shoes worn by this particular Cowan, and a hat of class. He murmured at the outlay upon useless finery. It materially depleted his capital—stored with other treasure in a tin box labelled "Cake" across its front. But Winona was tenacious. He murmured, too, at the ordeal of manicuring, but Winona was insistent, and laboured to leave him with the finger tips of one who did not habitually engage in a low calling.

He fell asleep at the final polishing, even after trying to fix his gaze upon the glittering nails of the hand Winona had relinquished, and while she sought to impress him with the importance of the approaching function. There would be present not only the Whipples, but their guests, two girl friends of Patricia from afar and a school friend of Merle's; there would be games and refreshment and social converse, and Winona hoped he would remember not to say "darn it" any time in such of the social converse as he provided; or forget to say, on leaving, what a charming time it was and how nice every one had been to ask him. He dozed through much of this instruction.

Yet Winona, the next day, felt repaid for her pains. Arrayed in the new suit, with the modish collar and cravat, the luminous shoes and the hat of merit, the boy looked entirely

like those careless youths in the pictures who so proudly proclaim the make of their garments. No one regarding him would have dreamed that he was at heart but a golf caddie or a driver of trucks for hire. Winona insisted upon a final polish of his nails, leaving them with a dazzling pinkish glitter, and she sprayed and anointed him with precious unguents, taking especial pains that his unruly brown hair should lie back close to his head, to show the wave.

When he installed her beside him in Sharon Whipple's newest car, pressed upon the youth by its owner for this occasion, she almost wished that she had been a bit more daring in her own dress. It was white and neat, but not fancy dressmaking in any sense of the word. She regretted for a moment her decision against pink rosebuds for the hat, so warmly urged by her mother, who kept saying nowadays that she would be a girl but once. Winona was beginning to doubt this. At least you seemed to be a girl a long time. She had been a little daring, though. Her stockings were white and of a material widely heralded as silkona. Still her skirt was of a decent length, so that she apprehended no scandal from this recklessness.

When her genteel escort started the car and guided it by an apparently careless winding of the wheel she felt a glow that was almost pride in his appearance and nonchalant mastery of this abstruse mechanism. She was frightened at the speed and at the narrow margin by which he missed other vehicles and obtruding corners. When he flourished to an impressive halt under the Whipple porte-cochère she felt a new respect for him. If only he could do such things at odd moments as a gentleman should, and not continuously for money, in clothes unlike those of the expensive advertisements!

She descended from the car in a flutter of pretense that she habitually descended from cars, and a moment later was overjoyed to note that her escort sustained the greetings of the assembled Whipples and their guests with a practiced coolness, or what looked like it. He shook hands warmly with

his brother and Patricia Whipple; was calm under the ordeal of introductions to the little friends Winona had warned him of—two girls of peerless beauty and a fair-haired, sleepy-looking boy with long eyelashes and dimples.

These young people were dressed rather less formally than Winona had expected, being mostly in flannels and ducks and tennis shoes not too lately cleaned. She was instantly glad she had been particular as to Wilbur's outfit. He looked ever so much more distinguished than either Merle or his friend. She watched him as he stood unconcerned under the chatter of the three girls. They had begun at once to employ upon him the oldest arts known to woman, and he was not flustered or "gauche"—a word Winona had lately learned. Beyond her divining was the truth that he would much rather have been talking to Starling Tucker. She thought he was merely trying to look bored, and was doing it very well.

The little friends of Patricia, and Patricia herself, could have told her better. They knew he was genuinely bored, and redoubled their efforts to enslave him. Merle chatted brightly with Winona, with such a man-of-the-world air that she herself became flustered at the memory that she had once been as a mother to him and drenched his handkerchief with perfume on a Sabbath morning. The little male friend of Merle stood by in silent relief. Patricia and her little guests had for three days been doing to him what they now tried doing to the new boy; he was glad the new boy had come. He had grown sulky under the incessant onslaughts.

The girl with black hair and the turquoise necklace was already reading Wilbur's palm, disclosing to him that he had a deep vein of cruelty in his nature. Patricia Whipple listened impatiently to this and other sinister revelations. She had not learned palm reading, but now resolved to. Meantime, she could and did stem the flood of character portrayal by a suggestion of tennis. Patricia was still freckled, though not so obtrusively as in the days of her lawlessness. Her skirt and her hair were longer, the latter being what

Wilbur Cowan later called rusty. She was still active and still determined, however. No girl in her presence was going to read interminably the palm of one upon whom she had, in a way of speaking, a family claim, especially one of such distinguished appearance and manners—apparently being bored to death by the attention of mere girls.

Tennis resulted in a set of doubles, Merle and his little friend playing Patricia and one of her little friends—the one with the necklace and the dark eyes. The desirable new man was not dressed for tennis, and could not have played it in any clothes whatever, and so had to watch from the back line, where he also retrieved balls. Both girls had insisted upon being at his end of the court. Their gentlemen opponents were irritated by this arrangement, because the girls paid far more attention to the new man than to the game itself. They delayed their service to catch his last remark; delayed the game seriously by pausing to chat with him. He retrieved balls for them, which also impeded progress.

When he brought the balls to the dark-eyed girl she acknowledged his courtesy with a pretty little "Thanks a lot!" Patricia varied this. She said "Thanks a heap!" And they both rather glared at the other girl—a mere pinkish, big-eyed girl whose name was Florrie—who lingered stanchly by the new man and often kept him in talk when he should have been watchful. Still this third girl had but little initiative. She did insinuatingly ask Wilbur what his favourite flower was, but this got her nowhere, because it proved that he did not know.

The gentlemen across the net presently became unruly, and would play no more at a game which was merely intended, it seemed, to provide their opponents with talk of a coquettish character. Wilbur ardently wished that Winona could have been there to hear this talk, because the peerless young things freely used the expletive "Darn!" after inept strokes. Still they bored him. He would rather have been on the links.

"THE GIRL WAS ALREADY READING WILBUR'S PALM, DISCLOSING TO HIM THAT HE HAD A DEEP VEIN OF CRUELTY IN HIS NATURE. PATRICIA WHIPPLE LISTENED IMPATIENTLY TO THIS AND OTHER SINISTER REVELATIONS."

He confessed at last to his little court that he much preferred golf to tennis. Patricia said that she had taken up golf, and that he must coach her over the Newbern course. The dark-eyed girl at once said that she was about to take up golf, and would need even more coaching than Patricia. Once they both searched him—while the game waited—for class pins, which they meant to appropriate. They found him singularly devoid of these. He never even knew definitely what they were looking for.

He was glad when refreshments were served on the lawn, and ate sandwiches in a wholehearted manner that disturbed Winona, who felt that at these affairs one should eat daintily, absently, as if elevated converse were the sole object and food but an incident. Wilbur ate as if he were hungry—had come there for food. Even now he was not free from the annoying attentions of Patricia and her little friends. They not only brought him other sandwiches and other cake and other lemonade, which he could have condoned, but they chattered so incessantly at him while he ate that only by an effort of concentration could he ignore them for the food. Florrie said that he was brutal to women. She was also heard to say—Winona heard it—that he was an awfully stunning chap. Harvey D. Whipple was now a member of the party, beaming proudly upon his son. And Sharon Whipple came presently to survey the group. He winked at Wilbur, who winked in return.

After refreshments the young gentlemen withdrew to smoke. They withdrew unostentatiously, through a pergola, round a clump of shrubbery, and on to the stables, where Merle revealed a silver cigarette case, from which he bestowed cigarettes upon them. They lighted these and talked as men of the world.

"Those chickens make me sick," said the little friend of Merle quite frankly.

"Me, too!" said Wilbur.

They talked of horses, Merle displaying his new thoroughbred in the box stall, and of dogs and motor boats; and Merle

and the other boy spoke in a strange jargon of their prep school, where you could smoke if you had the consent of your parents. Merle talked largely of his possessions and gay plans.

They were presently interrupted by the ladies, who, having withdrawn beyond the shrubbery clump to powder their noses from Florrie's gold vanity box, had discovered the smokers, and now threatened to tell if the gentlemen did not instantly return. So Merle's little friend said wearily that they must go back to the women, he supposed. And there was more tennis of a sort, more chatter. As Mrs. Harvey D. said, everything moved off splendidly.

Winona, when they left, felt that her charge had produced a favourable impression, and was amazed that he professed to be unmoved by this circumstance, even after being told, as the noble car wheeled them homeward, what the girl, Florrie, had said of him; and that Mrs. Harvey D. Whipple had said she had always known he was a sweet boy. He merely sniffed at the term and went on to disparage the little friends of Patricia.

"You told me not to say 'darn,'" he protested, "but those girls all said it about every other word."

"Not really?" said Winona, aghast.

"Darn this and darn that! And darn that ball! And darned old thing!" insisted the witness, imitatively.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Winona.

She wondered if Patricia could be getting in with a fast set. She was further worried about Patricia, because Miss Murtree, over the ice cream, had confided to her that the girl was a brainless coquette; that her highest ambition, freely stated, was to have a black velvet evening gown, a black picture hat, and a rope of pearls. Winona did not impart this item to Wilbur. He was already too little impressed with the Whipple state. Nor did she confide to him the singular remark of Sharon Whipple, delivered to her in hoarsely whispered confidence as Merle spoke at length to the group about his new horse.

"Ain't he the most languageous critter!" had been Sharon's words.

And Winona had thought Merle spoke so prettily and with such easy confidence. Instead of regaling Wilbur with this gossip she insinuated his need for flannel trousers, sport shirts with rolling collars, tennis shoes of white. She found him adamant in his resolve to buy no further clothes which could have but a spectacular value.

To no one that day, except to Wilbur Cowan himself, had it occurred that Merle Whipple's birthday would also be the birthday of his twin brother.

Winona hoped that some trace of the day's new elegance would survive into Wilbur's professional life, but in this she suffered disappointment. He refused to wear, save on state occasions, any of the beautiful new garments, and again went forth in the cap and dingy sneakers, the trousers without character, and the indeterminate sweater which would persist in looking soiled even after relentless washing.

Not even for golf with Patricia Whipple would he sound a higher note in apparel. Patricia came to the course, accompanied by the dark girl, who said she was mad about golf, and over the eighteen holes each strove for his exclusive attention. They bored him vastly. He became mad about golf himself, because they talked noisily of other subjects and forgot his directions, especially the dark girl, who was mad about a great many things. She proved to be a trial. She was still so hopeless at the sport that at each shot she had to have her hands placed for her in the correct grip. The other two were glad when she was called home, so that Patricia could enjoy the undivided attention of the coach. The coach was glad, but only because his boredom was diminished by half; and Patricia, after two mornings alone with him, decided that she knew all of golf that was desirable.

The coach was too stubbornly businesslike; regarded her, she detected, merely as someone who had a lot to learn about the game. And the going of her little friend had taken a zest

from the pursuit of this determinedly golfing and unresponsive male. He was relieved when she abandoned the sport and when he knew she had gone back to school. Sometimes on the course when he watched her wild swings a trick of memory brought her back to him as the bony little girl in his own clothes—she was still bony, though longer—with her chopped-off hair and boyish swagger. Then for a moment he would feel friendly, and smile at her in comradeship, but she always spoiled this when she spoke in her grand new manner of a grown-up lady.

Only Winona grieved when these golf sessions were no more. She wondered if Patricia had not been shocked by some unguarded expression from Wilbur. She had heard that speech becomes regrettably loose in the heat of this sport. He sought to reassure her.

"I never said the least wrong thing," he insisted. "But she did, you bet! 'Darn' and 'gosh' and everything like that, and you ought to have heard her once when she missed an easy putt. She said worse than 'darn!' She blazed out and said——"

"Don't tell me!" protested shuddering Winona. She wondered if Patricia's people shouldn't be warned. She was now persuaded that golf endangered the morals of the young. It had been bad enough when it seemed merely to encourage the wearing of nondescript clothes. But if it led to language——

Yet she was fated to discover that the world offered worse than golf, for Wilbur Cowan had not yet completed, in the process of his desultory education, the out-of-doors curriculum offered by even the little world of Newbern. He was to take up an entirely new study, with the whole-hearted enthusiasm that had made him an adept at linotypes, gas engines, and the sport of kings. Not yet, in Winona's view, had he actually gone down into the depths of social obliquity; but she soon knew he had made the joyous descent.

The dreadful secret was revealed when he appeared for his supper one evening with a black eye. That is, it would

have been known technically as a black eye—even Winona knew what to call it. Actually it was an eye of many colours, shading delicately from pale yellow at the edge to richest variegated purple at the centre. The eye itself—it was the right—was all but closed by the gorgeously puffed tissue surrounding it, and of no practical use to its owner. The still capable left eye, instead of revealing concern for this ignominy, gleamed a lively pride in its overwhelming completeness. The malign eye was worn proudly as a badge of honour, so proudly that the wearer, after Winona's first outcry of horror, bubbled vaingloriously of how he had achieved the stigma by stepping into one of Spike Brennon's straight lefts. Nothing less than that!

Winona, conceiving that this talk was meant to describe an accident of the most innocent character, demanded further details; wishing to be told what a straight left was; why a person named Spike Brennon kept such things about; and how Wilbur had been so careless as to step into one. She instinctively pictured a straight left to be something like an open door into which the victim had stepped in the dark. Her enlightenment was appalling. When the boy had zestfully pictured with pantomime of the most informing sort she not only knew what a straight left was, but she knew that Wilbur Cowan, in stepping into one—in placing himself where by any chance he could step into one—had flung off the ultimate restraint of decency.

It amounted to nothing less, she gathered, than that her charge had formed a sinister alliance with a degraded prize-fighter, a low bully who for hire and amid the foulest surroundings pandered to the basest instincts of his fellowmen by disgusting exhibitions of brute force. As if that were not enough, this low creature had fallen lower in the social scale, if that were possible, by tending bar in the unspeakable den of Pegleg McCarron. It was of no use for Wilbur to explain to her that his new hero chose this humble avocation because it afforded him leisure for training between his fights; that he didn't drink or smoke, but kept himself in good con-

dition; that it was a fine chance to learn how to box, because Spike needed sparring partners.

"Oh, it's terrible!" cried Winona. "A debased creature like that!"

"You ought to see him stripped!" rejoined the boy in quick pride.

This closed the interview. Later she refused more than a swift glance of dismay at the photograph of the bully proudly displayed to her by the recipient. With one eye widened in admiration, he thrust it without warning full into her gaze, whereupon she had gaspingly fled, not even noting the inscription of which the boy was especially proud: "To my friend, Mr. Wilbur Cowan, from his friend, Eddie—Spike—Brennon, 133 lbs. ringside." It was a spirited likeness of the hero, though taken some years before, when he was in the prime of a ring career now, alas, tapering to obscurity.

Spike stood with the left shoulder slightly raised, the left foot advanced, the slightly bent left arm with its clenched fist suggestively extended. His head was slanted to bring his chin down and in. The right shoulder was depressed, and the praiseworthy right arm lay in watchful repose across his chest. The tense gaze expressed absolute singleness of purpose—a hostile purpose. These details were lost upon Winona. She had noted only that the creature's costume consisted of the flags of the United States and Ireland tastefully combined to form a simple loin cloth. Had she raised the boy for this?

The deplored intimacy had begun on a morning when Wilbur was early abroad salvaging golf balls from certain obscure nooks of the course where Newbern's minor players were too likely to abandon the search for them on account of tall grass, snakes, poison ivy, and other deterrents. Along the course at a brisk trot had come a sweatered figure, with cap pulled low, a man of lined and battered visage, who seemed to trot with a purpose, and yet with a purpose not to be dis-

cerned, for none pursued him and he appeared to pursue no one.

He had stopped amiably to chat with the boy. He was sweating profusely, and chewed gum. It may be said that he was not the proud young Spike Brennon of the photograph. He was all of twenty-five, and his later years had told. Where once had been the bridge of his nose was now a sharp indentation. One ear was weirdly enlarged; and his mouth, though he spoke through narrowly opened lips, glittered in the morning sun with the sheen of purest gold. Wilbur Cowan was instantly enmeshed by this new personality.

The runner wished to know what he was looking for. Being told golf balls, he demanded "What for?" It seemed never to have occurred to him that there would be an object in looking for golf balls. He curiously handled and weighed a ball in his brown and hairy hand.

"So that's the little joker, is it? I often seen 'em knockin' up flies with it, but I ain't never been close to one. Say, that pill could hurt you if it come right!"

He was instructed briefly in the capacity of moving balls to inflict pain, and more particularly as to their market value. As the boy talked the sweating man looked him over with shrewd, half-shut eyes.

"Ever had the gloves on, kid?" he demanded at last.

It appeared in a moment that he meant boxing gloves; not gloves in which to play golf.

"No, sir," said Wilbur.

"You look good. Come down to the store at three o'clock. Mebbe you can give me a work-out."

Quite astonishingly it appeared then that when he said the store he was meaning the low saloon of Pegleg McCarron; that he did road work every morning and wanted quick young lads to give him a work-out with the gloves in the afternoon, because even dubs was better than shadow boxing or just punching the bag all the time. If they couldn't box-fight they could wrestle.

So Wilbur had gone to the store that afternoon, and for many succeeding afternoons, to learn the fascinating new game in a shed that served McCarron as storeroom. The new hero had here certain paraphernalia of his delightful calling—a punching bag, small dumb-bells, a skipping rope, boxing gloves. Here the neophyte had been taught the niceties of feint and guard and lead, of the right cross, the uppercut, the straight left, to duck, to side-step, to shift lightly on his feet, to stop protruding his jaw in cordial invitation, to keep his stomach covered. He proved attentive and willing and quick. He was soon chewing gum as Spike Brennon chewed it, and had his hair clipped in Brennon manner. He lived his days and his nights in dreams of delivering or evading blows. Often while dressing of a morning he would stop to punish an invisible opponent, doing an elaborate dance the while. It was better than linotypes or motor busses.

In the early days of this new study he had been fearful of hurting Spike Brennon. He felt that his blows were too powerful, especially that from the right fist when it should curve over Spike's left shoulder to stop on his jaw. But he learned that when his glove reached the right place Spike's jaw had for some time not been there. Spike scorned his efforts.

"Stop it, kid! You might as well send me a pitcher postcard that it's comin'. You got to hit from where you are—you can't stop to draw back. Use your left more. G'wan now, mix it! Mix it!"

They would mix it until the boy was panting. Then while he sat on a beer keg until he should be in breath again the unwinded Spike would skip the rope—a girl's skipping rope—or shadow-box about the room with intricate dance steps, raining quick blows upon a ghostly boxer who was invariably beaten; or with smaller gloves he would cause the inflated bag to play lively tunes upon the ceiling of its support. After an hour of this, when both were sweating, they would go to a sheltered spot beyond the shed to play cold water upon each other's soaped forms.

There had been six weeks of this before the boy's dreadful secret was revealed to Winona; six weeks before he appeared to startle her with one eye radiating the rich hues of a ripened eggplant. It had been simple enough. He had seen his chance to step in and punish Spike, and he had stepped—and Spike's straight left had been there.

"You handed yourself that one, kid," Spike had said, applying raw beef to it after their rubdown.

Wilbur had removed the beef after leaving the store. He didn't want the thing to go down too soon. It was an honourable mark, wasn't it? Nothing to make the fuss about that Winona had made. Of course you had to go to Pegleg McCarron's to do the boxing, but Spike had warned him never to drink if he expected to get anywhere in this particular trade; not even to smoke. That he had entirely abandoned the use of tobacco at Spike's command should—he considered—have commended his hero to Winona's favourable notice. He wore the eye proudly in the public gaze; regretted its passing as it began to pale into merely rainbow tints.

But Winona took steps. She was not going to see him die, perish morally, without an effort to save him. She decided that Sharon Whipple would be the one to consult. Sharon liked the boy—had taken an interest in him. Perhaps words in time from him might avert the calamity, especially after her father had refused to be concerned.

"Prize fighting!" said the judge, scornfully. "What'll he be doing next? Never settles down to anything. Jack-of-all-trades and good at none."

It was no use hoping for help from a man who thought fighting was foolish for the boy merely because he would not earnestly apply himself to it.

She went to Sharon Whipple, and Sharon listened even more sympathetically than she had hoped he would. He seemed genuinely shocked that such things had been secretly going on in the life of his young friend. He clicked deprecatingly with his tongue as Winona became detailed in her narrative.

"My great glory!" he exclaimed at last. "You mean to say they mix it down there every afternoon?"

"Every single day," confirmed Winona. "He's been going to that low dive for weeks and weeks. Think of the debasing associations!"

"Just think of it!" said Sharon, impatiently. "Every afternoon—and me not hearing a word of it!"

"If you could only say a word to him," besought Winona. "Coming from you it might have an influence for good."

"I will, I will!" promised Sharon, fervently, and there was a gleam of honest determination in his quick old eyes.

That very afternoon, in Pegleg McCarron's shed, he said words to Wilbur that might have an influence for good.

"Quit sticking your jaw out that way or he'll knock it off!" had been his first advice. And again: "Cover up that stomach—you want to get killed?" He was sitting at one end of the arena, on a plank supported by the ends of two beer kegs, and he held open a large, thick, respectable gold watch. "Time!" he called.

Beside him sat the red-eyed and disreputable Pegleg McCarron, who whacked the floor with the end of his crutch from time to time in testimony of his low pleasure.

The round closed with one of Wilbur Cowan's right crosses —started from not too far back—landing upon the jaw of Spike Brennon with what seemed to be a shattering impact. Sharon Whipple yelled and Pegleg McCarron pounded the floor in applause. Spike merely shook his head once.

"The kid's showing speed," he admitted, cordially. "If he just had something back of them punches!"

"It was a daisy!" exclaimed Sharon. "My suffering stars, what a daisy!"

"'Twas neatly placed!" said Pegleg.

"I'm surprised at you!" said Sharon later to the panting apprentice. "I'm surprised and grieved! You boys mixing it here every day for weeks and never letting on!"

"I never thought you'd like it," said Wilbur.

"Like it!" said Sharon. He said it unctuously. "And

say, don't you let on to Miss Penniman that I set here and held the watch for you. I ain't wanting that to get out on me."

"No, sir," said Wilbur.

Later Sharon tried to avoid Winona one day on River Street, but when he saw that she would not be avoided he met her like a man.

"I've reasoned with the boy from time to time," he confessed, gloomily, "but he's self-headed, talking huge high about being a good lightweight and all that. I don't know—mebbe I haven't taken just the right tack with him yet."

Winona thought him curiously evasive in manner. She believed that he feared the worst for the boy, but was concealing it from her.

"His eye is almost well where that cowardly bully struck him," she told Sharon. "If only we could get him into something where he could hold his head up."

"He does that too much now," began Sharon, impulsively, but stopped, floundering. "I mean he ain't enough ashamed," he concluded feebly, and feigned that someone had called him imperatively from the door of the First National Bank.

From time to time Spike's boxing manner grew tense for a period of days. He tightened up, as Sharon put it, and left a sore and battered apprentice while he went off to some distant larger town to fight, stepping nonchalantly aboard the six-fifty-eight with his fighting trunks and shoes wrapped in a copy of the Newbern *Advance*, and shifting his gum as he said good-bye to Wilbur, who would come down to see him off.

Sometimes Spike returned from these sorties unscathed and with money. Oftener he came back without money and with a face—from abrasive thrusts—looking as if a careless golfer had gone over him and neglected to replace the divots. After these times there were likely to follow complicated episodes of dentistry at the office of Doctor Patten. These would render the invincible smile of Spike more refulgent than ever.

The next birthday of Merle Whipple was celebrated at a time when Spike had been particularly painstaking in view of an approaching combat. Not only did he leave his young friend with an eye that compelled the notice, an eye lavishly displaying all the tints yet revealed by spectroscopic analysis, and which by itself would have rendered him socially undesirable, but he bore a swollen nose and a split and puffy lip; bore them proudly, it should be said, and was not enough cast down, in Winona's opinion, that his shameful wounds would deter him from mingling with decent folk. Indeed, Winona had to be outspoken before she convinced him that a birthday party was now no place for him. He would have gone without misgiving, and would have pridefully recounted the sickening details of that last round in which Spike Brennon had permitted himself to fancy he faced a veritable antagonist. Still he cared little for the festivity.

He saw Patricia from a distance in River Street, but pulled the dingy cap lower and avoided her notice. She was still bony and animated and looked quite capable of commanding his attendance over eighteen holes of the most utterly futile golf in all the world. His only real regret in the matter of his facial blemishes was that Spike came back with the mere loser's end of an inconsiderable purse, and had to suffer another infliction of the most intricate bridge work at the hands of Doctor Patten before he could properly enjoy at the board of T-bone Tommy that diet so essential to active men of affairs.

CHAPTER XII

ONCE more the aging Wilbur Cowan stood alone by night thrillingly to watch the arched splendour of stars above and muse upon the fleeting years that carried off his youth. The moment marked another tremendous epoch, for he was done with school. Now for all the years to come he could hear the bell sound its warning and feel no qualm; never again need sit confined in a stuffy room, breathing chalk dust, and compel his errant mind to bookish abstractions. He had graduated from the Newbern High School, respectably if not with distinguished honour, and the superintendent had said, in conferring his rolled and neatly tied diploma, that he was facing the battle of life and must acquit himself with credit to Newbern.

The superintendent had seemed to believe it was a great moment; there had been a tremor in his voice as he addressed the class, each in turn. He was a small, nervous, intent man whose daily worries showed plainly through the uplift of the moment, and Wilbur had wondered what he found to be so thrilled about. His own battle with life—he must have gone out to the fight years ago under much the same circumstances—had apparently brought him none of the glory he was now urging his young charges to strive for. He had to stay in a schoolroom and breathe chalk dust.

Whatever the battle of life might be, he was going to fight it out-of-doors; not like imprisoned school-teachers and clerks and bookkeepers in First National banks. Only when alone under that splatter of stars did he feel the moment big with more than a mere release from textbooks. Then at last he knew that he had become a man and must put away childish things, and his mind floated on the thought, off to those

distant stars where other boys had that night, perhaps unwittingly, become men.

He wished that people would not pester him with solemn questions about what he now meant to make of himself. They seemed to believe that he should be concerned about this. Winona was especially insistent. She said he stood at the parting of the ways; that all his future hung upon his making a seemly choice; and she said it gloomily, with frank foreboding, as one more than half expecting him to choose amiss.

Judge Penniman was another who warned him heavily that it was time to quit being a Jack-of-all-trades. The judge spoke as from a topless tower of achievement, relating anecdotes of his own persistence under difficulties at the beginning of a career which he allowed his hearer to infer had been of shining merit, hampered, it is true, by the most trying ill health. Even Mrs. Penniman said that they were expecting great things of him, now that he had become a man.

The boy dimly felt that there was something false in all this urgency. The superintendent of schools and Winona and the judge and Mrs. Penniman seemed to be tightly wound up with expectancy about him, yet lived their own lives not too tensely. The superintendent of schools was not inspiring as a model; the judge, for all his talk, lived a life of fat idleness, with convenient maladies when the Penniman lawn needed mowing. Mrs. Penniman, it is true, fought the battle of life steadily with her plain and fancy dressmaking, but with no visible glory; and Winona herself was becoming a drab, sedate spinster, troubled about many things. He wondered why they should all conceive him to be meant for so much more than they had achieved. Why couldn't he relax into a life such as they led, without all this talk of effort and planning? It seemed to him that people pretty much allowed life to make itself for them, and lived it as it came. He was not going to bother about it. Let it come. He would find a way to live it. People managed. Judge Penniman was never so ailing that he couldn't reach

the harness shop for his game of checkers. The only person he knew who had really worked hard to make something of himself was Spike Brennon.

So he resorted to the golf links that summer, heedless and happy. "Without ideals so far as one can read him," wrote Winona in her journal, underlining the indictment and closing it with three bold exclamation points. He was welcomed effusively to the golf course by John Knox McTavish.

"Good!" said John on the morning of his appearance, which was effusive for any McTavish.

He liked the boy, not only because he drove a sweet ball, but because you could talk to him in a way you couldn't to par-r-r-rties you was teaching to hold a club proper-r-r-r and to quit callin' it a stick.

He caddied that summer only for golfers of the better sort, and for Sharon Whipple, choosing his employ with nice discrimination. John had said golf was a grand game, because more than any other game it showed how many kinds of fool a man could be betwixt his mind and his muscles. His apprentice was already sensitive to the grosser kinds. In addition to caddying he taught the secrets of the game when pupils came too plenteously for John. But he lacked John's tried patience, and for the ideal teacher was too likely to utter brutal truths instead of polite and meandering diplomacies. He had caught perhaps a bit too much of Spike Brennon's manner of instruction, a certain strained brusquerie, out of pace with people who are willing to pay largely for instruction which they ignore in spite of its monotonous repetition. John warned him that he must soften his clients—butter-r-r 'em up with nice words—or they wouldn't come back. He must say they was doing gr-r-rand. He did say it now and then, but with no ring of conviction.

Still it was a good summer. Especially good, because all the time he knew he was waiting for that morning in early September when the school bell would ring and he would

laugh carelessly at what had once been the imperious summons. He thought that after this high moment he might be able to plan his life at least a little—not too minutely.

Late that summer Merle and Patricia Whipple came by appointment to play the course with him. Merle, too, had become a man—he would enter college that fall. Apparently no one was bothering about the plan of his life. And Patricia had become, if not a woman, at least less of a girl, though she was still bony and utterly freckled. They drove off, Patricia not far but straight, and Merle, after impressive preliminaries that should have intimidated any golf ball, far but not straight. After his shot he lectured instructively upon its faults. When he had done they knew why he had sliced into the miry fen on the right. Then with an expert eye he studied his brother's stance and swing. The ball of Wilbur went low and straight and far, but the shot was prefaced, apparently, by no nice adjustment of the feet or by any preliminary waggles of the club.

"No form," said Merle. "You ought to have form by this time, but you don't show any; and you put no force into your swing. Now let me show you just one little thing about your stance."

With generous enthusiasm he showed his brother not only one little thing, but two or three that should be a buckler to him in time of need; and his brother thanked him, and so authoritative was the platform manner of Merle that he nearly said "Yes, sir." After which Patricia played a brassy shot, and they all went to find Merle's ball among the oaks. After that they went on to Wilbur's ball, which—still without a trace of form—he dropped on the green with a mashie, in spite of Merle's warning that he would need a mid-iron to reach it.

They drove, and again Merle lectured upon the three reasons why his ball came to rest in a sand trap that flanked the fairway. He seemed to feel this information was expected from him, nor did he neglect a generous exposition of his

brother's failure to exhibit form commensurate with his far, straight drive. His brother was this time less effusive in his thanks, and in no danger whatever of replying "Yes, sir!" He merely retorted, "Don't lunge—keep down!" advice which the lecturer received with a frowning, "I know —I know!" as if he had lunged intentionally, with a secret purpose that would some day become known, to the confusion of so-called golf experts. Wilbur and Patricia waited while Merle went to retrieve his ball. They saw repeated sand showers rise over the top of a bunker. From where they stood the player seemed to be inventing a new kind of golf, to be played without a ball. A pale mist hung over the scene.

"I know just what he's saying," Patricia told Wilbur.

"Shame on you!" said he, and they both laughed, after which Patricia glanced at him oftener.

It should be said that he was now arrayed as Winona would have him, in summer sports attire of careless but expensive appearance, including a silk shirt alleged by the maker to be snappy, and a cap of real character. The instinct of the male for noticeable plumage had at last worked the reform that not all of Winona's pleading had sufficed for. Wilbur Cowan at the moment might, but for his excellent golf, have been mistaken for a genuine Whipple.

Merle's homilies continued after each shot. He subjected his own drives to a masterly analysis, and strove to incite his brother to correct form, illustrating this for his instruction with practice swings that were marvels of nicety, and learnedly quoting Braid and Vardon.

It was after one of these informative intervals, succeeding a brilliantly topped drive by the lecturer, that Patricia Whipple, full in the flooding current of Merle's discourse, turned her speckled face aside and flagrantly winked a greenish eye at Wilbur Cowan; whereupon Wilbur Cowan winked his own left eye, that one being farthest from the speaker. The latter, having concluded his remarks for the moment, went to find his ball, and the two walked on.

"He just ought to be taken down," suggested Patricia, malevolently.

"Think so?" demanded Wilbur.

"Know so!" declared the girl. "'Tisn't only golf. He's that way about everything—telling people things—how to do it and everything. Only no one at our house dares come down on him. Harvey D. and Ella and even grandfather—they all jump through hoops for him, the cowards! I give him a jolt now and then, but I get talked to for it."

"The boy needs some golf talk—he certainly does," conceded the other.

"Too bad you're afraid to do it," Patricia said, resignedly.

She looked sadly away, then quickly back at him to see if it had taken. She thought it hadn't. He was merely looking as if he also considered it too bad. But on the next tee he astonishingly asserted himself as—comparatively—a golfing expert. He wasn't going to have this splendid brother, truly his brother for all the change of name, making a fool of himself before a girl. Full in the tide of Merle's jaunty discourse he blazed out with an authority of his own, and in tones so arrogant that the importance of the other oozed almost pitiably from him.

"Quit that! Listen! We've played ten holes, and you haven't made one clean drive, and I've got off every one clean. I make this course in seventy-three, and you'd never make it in one hundred and twenty the way you're going. But every time you stand there and tell me things about your drive and about mine as if you could really play golf."

"Well, but my dear chap—" Merle paused, trying to regain some lost spiritual value—"I'm merely telling you some little things about form."

"Forget it!" commanded the other. "You haven't any form yourself; you don't have form until you can play the game, and then you don't think about it. Maybe my form doesn't stick out, but you bet it must be tucked in there somewhere or I couldn't hit the ball. You don't want to

think I haven't any just because I don't stand there and make a long speech to the ball before swatting it."

"Well, I was only saying——" Merle began again, but in meekness such as Patricia had never observed in him.

Hearing a sound in the background Wilbur turned. She was staging a pantomime of excessive delight, noiselessly clapping her thin brown hands. He frowned at her—he was not going to have any girl laughing at his brother—and returned his attention to the late exponent of Braid and Vardon.

"Here"—he teed a ball—"you do about every wrong thing you could. You don't overlook a single one. Now I'll show you. Take your stance, address the ball!"

He had forgotten, in the heat of his real affection, all the difference in their stations. He was talking crisply to this Whipple as if he were merely a Cowan twin. Merle, silent, dazed, meek, did as he was directed.

"Now take your back swing slower. You've been going up too quick—go up slow—stay there! Wait—bend that left wrist under your club—not out but under—here"—he adjusted the limp wrist. "Now keep your weight on the left foot and come down easy. Don't try to knock the ball a mile—it can't be done. Now up again and swing—easy!"

Merle swung and the topped ball went a dozen feet.

"There, now I suppose you're satisfied!" he said, sulkily, but his instructor was not, it seemed, satisfied.

"Don't be silly! You lifted your head. You have to do more than one thing right to hit that ball. You have to stay down to it. Here"—he teed another ball—"take your stance and see if you can't keep down. I'll hold you down." In front of the player he grasped his own driver and rested it lightly upon the other's head. "Just think that club weighs a hundred pounds, and you couldn't lift your head if you wanted to. Now swing again, turn the left wrist under, swing easy—there!"

They watched the ball go high and straight, even if not far.

"A Texas leaguer," said Wilbur, "but it's all right. It's

the first time this afternoon you've stayed in the fairway. Now again!"

He teed another ball, and the threesomes had become a mere golf lesson, plus a clash of personalities. Wilbur Cowan did all the talking; he was grim, steely eyed, imperious. His splendid brother was mute and submissive, after a few feeble essays at assertion that were brutally stifled. Patricia danced disrespectfully in the background when neither brother observed her. She had no wish to incur again the tightly drawn scowl of Wilbur. The venom of that had made her uncomfortable.

"See now how you hit 'em out when you do what I tell you!" said the instructor at last, when Merle had a dozen clean drives to his credit. But the sun had fallen low and the lesson must end.

"Awfully obliged, old chap—thanks a heap!" said Merle, recovering slightly from his abjectness. "I dare say I shall be able to smack the little pill after this."

The old chap hurled a last grenade.

"You won't if you keep thinking about form," he warned. "Best way to forget that—quit talking so much about it. After you make a shot, keep still, or talk to yourself."

"Awfully good of you," Merle responded, graciously, for he was no longer swinging at a ball, but merely walking back to the clubhouse, where one man was as good as another. "There may be something in what you say."

"There is," said Wilbur.

He waved them a curt farewell as they entered the latest Whipple car.

"But, you know, the poor kid after all hasn't any form," the convalescent Merle announced to Patricia when they were seated.

"He has nice hair and teeth," said the girl, looking far ahead as the car moved off.

"Oh, hair—teeth!" murmured Merle, loftily careless, as one possessing hair and teeth of his own. "I'm talking about golf."

"He lines 'em out," said Patricia, cattishly.

"Too much like a professional." Merle lifted a hand from the wheel to wave deprecation. "That's what the poor kid gets for hanging about that clubhouse all the time."

"The poor kid!" murmured Patricia. "I never noticed him much before."

"Beastly overbearing sort of chap," said Merle.

"Isn't he?" said Patricia. "I couldn't help but notice that." She shifted her eyes sidewise at Merle. "I do wish some of the folks could have been there," she added, listlessly.

"Is that so?" he demanded, remembering then that this girl was never to be trusted, even in moods seemingly honeyed. He spurted the new roadster in rank defiance of Newbern's lately enacted ordinance regulating the speed of motor vehicles.

Yet the night must have brought him counsel, for he appeared the next afternoon—though without Patricia—to beseech further instruction from the competent brother. He did this rather humbly for one of his station.

"I know my game must be pretty rotten," he said. "Maybe you can show me one or two more little things."

"I'll show you the same old things over again," said Wilbur, overjoyed at this friendly advance, and forthwith he did.

For a week they played the course together, not only to the betterment of Merle's technic, but to the promotion of a real friendliness between this Whipple and a mere Cowan. They became as brothers again, seeming to have leaped the span of years during which they had been alien. During those years Wilbur had kept secret his pride in his brother, his exultation that Merle should have been called for this high eminence and not found wanting. There had been no one to whom he could reveal it, except to Winona, perhaps in little flashes. Now that they were alone in a curious renewal of their old intimacy, he permitted it to shine forth in all its fullness, and Merle became pleasantly aware that this sharp-speaking brother—where golf was concerned—felt for him something much like worship. The glow warmed

them both as they loitered over the course, stopping at leisure to recall ancient happenings of their boyhood together. Far apart now in their points of view, the expensively nurtured Merle, and Wilbur, who had grown as he would, whose education was of the street and the open, they found a common ground and rejoiced in their contact.

"I don't understand why we haven't seen more of each other all these years," said Merle on a late day of this renewed companionship. "Of course I've been away a lot—school and trips and all that."

"And I'm still a small-towner," said Wilbur, though delightedly. It was worth being a small-towner to have a brother so splendid.

"We must see a lot of each other from now on," insisted Merle. "We must get together this way every time I come back."

"We must," said Wilbur. "I hope we do, anyway," he added, reflecting that this would be one of those things too good to come true.

"What I don't understand," went on Merle, "you haven't had the advantages I have, not gone off to school or met lots of people, as I'm always doing, not seen the world, you know, but you seem so much older than I am. I guess you seem at least ten years older."

"Well, I don't know." Wilbur pondered this. "You do seem younger some way. Maybe a small town makes people old quicker, knocking round one the way I have, bumping up against things here and there. I don't know at all. Sharon Whipple says the whole world is made up mostly of small towns; if you know one through and through you come pretty near knowing the world. Maybe that's just his talk."

"Surly old beggar. Somehow I never hit it off well with him. Too sarcastic, thinking he's funny all the time; uncouth, too."

"Well, perhaps so." Wilbur was willing to let this go. He did not consider Sharon Whipple surly or uncouth or

sarcastic, but he was not going to dispute with this curiously restored brother. "Try a brassy on that," he suggested, to drop the character of Sharon Whipple.

Merle tried the brassy, and they played out the hole. Merle made an eight.

"I should have had a six at most," he protested, "after that lovely long brassy shot."

Wilbur grinned.

"John McTavish says the should-have-had score for this course is a mar-r-rvel. He says if these people could count their should-have-hads they'd all be playing under par. He's got a wicked tongue, that John."

"Well, anyway," insisted Merle, "you should have had a four, because you were talking to me when you flubbed that approach shot; that cost you a couple."

"John says the cards should have another column added to write in excuses; after each hole you could put down just why you didn't get it in two less. He says that would be gr-r-r-and f'r th' dubs."

"The hole is four hundred and eighty yards, and you were thirty yards from the green in two," said Merle. "You should have had——"

"I guess I should have had what I got. Sharon Whipple says that's the way with a lot of people in this life—make fine starts, and then flub their short game, fall down on easy putts and all that, after they get on the lawn. He calls the fair greens lawns."

"Awful old liar when he counts his own score," said Merle. "I played with him just once."

Wilbur grinned again. He would cheerfully permit this one slander of his friend.

"You certainly can't trust him out of sight in a sand trap," he conceded. "You'll say, 'How many, Mr. Whipple?' and he'll say, 'Well, let me see—eight and a short tote—that's it, eight and a tote.' He means that he made eight, or about eight, by lifting it from the rough about ten feet on to the fairway."

"Rotten sportsmanship," declared Merle.

"No, no, he's a good sport, all right! He'd expect you to do the same, or tee up a little bit for a mid-iron shot. He says he won't read the rules, because they're too fine print. I like the old boy a lot," he concluded, firmly. He wanted no misunderstanding about that, even if Merle should esteem him less for it.

They drove from the next tee. One hundred and fifty yards ahead the fairway was intersected by a ditch. It was deep, and its cruel maw yawned hungrily for golf balls. These it was fed in abundance daily.

"Rottenly placed, that ditch!" complained Merle as he prepared to drive.

"Only because you think so," replied his brother. "Forget it's there, and you'll carry it every time. That's what Sharon Whipple does. It's what they call psychology. It's a mental hazard. Sharon Whipple says that's another thing about golf that's like real life. He says most all things that scare us are just mental hazards."

"Stuff!" said Merle. "Stuffy stuffness! The ditch is there, isn't it, psychology or no psychology? You might ignore a hungry tiger, but calling him a mental hazard wouldn't stop him from eating you, would it? Sharon Whipple makes me tired." He placed a drive neatly in the ditch. "There!" he exploded, triumphantly. "I guess that shows you what the old gas bag knows about it."

"Oh, you'll soon learn to carry that hole!" his brother soothed. "Now let's see what you can do with that niblick." He grinned again as they went on to the ditch. "Sharon Whipple calls his niblick his 'gitter'." Merle, however, would not join in the grin. Sharon Whipple still made him tired.

In the course of their desultory playing they discussed the other Whipples.

"Of course they're awfully fond of me," said Merle.

"Of course," said Wilbur.

"I guess Harvey D.—Father—would give me anything in the world I asked for, ever since I was a kid. Horses, dogs,

guns, motor cars—notice the swell little roadster I'm driving? Birthday! You'd almost think he looks up to me. Says he expects great things of me."

"Why wouldn't he?" demanded the other.

"Oh, of course, of course!" Merle waved this aside. "And Grandfather Gideon, he's an old brick. College man himself—class of sixty-five. Think of that, way back in the last century! Sharon Whipple never got to college. Ran off to fight in the Civil War or something. That's why he's so countrified, I s'pose. You take Gideon now—he's a gentleman. Any one could see that. Not like Sharon. Polished old boy you'd meet in a club. And Mrs. Harvey D.—Mother—say, she can't do enough for me! Bores me stiff lots of times about whether I'm not going to be sick or something. And money—Lord! I'm supposed to have an allowance, but they all hand me money and tell me not to say anything about it to the others. Of course I don't. And Harvey D. himself—he tries to let on he's very strict about the allowance, then he'll pretend he didn't pay me the last quarter and hand me two quarters at once. He knows he's a liar, and he knows I know it, too. I guess I couldn't have fallen in with a nicer bunch. Even that funny daughter of Sharon's, Cousin Juliana, she warms up now and then—slips me a couple of twenties or so. You should have seen the hit I made at prep! Fellows there owe me money now that I bet I never do get paid back. But no matter, of course."

"That Juliana always makes me kind of shiver," admitted Wilbur. "She looks so kind of—well, kind of lemonish."

"She's all of that, that old girl. She's the only one I never do get close to. Soured old maid, I guess. Looks at you a lot, but doesn't say much, like she was sizing you up. That nose of hers certainly does stand out like a peak or something. You wouldn't think it, either, but she reads poetry—mushiest kind—awful stuff. Say, I looked into a book of hers one day over at the Old Place—Something-or-Other Love Lyrics was the title—murder! I caught two or three things—talk about raw stuff—you know, fellows and

girls and all that! What she gets out of it beats me, with that frozen face of hers."

A little later he portrayed the character of Patricia Whipple in terms that would have incensed her but that moved Wilbur to little but mild interest.

"You never know when you got your thumb on that kid," he said. "She's the shifty one, all right. Talk along to you sweet as honey, but all the time she's watching for some chance to throw the harpoon into you. Venomous—regular vixen. No sense of humour—laughs at almost anything a fellow says or does. Trim you in a minute with that tongue of hers. And mushy! Reads stories about a young girl falling in love with strange men that come along when her car busts down on a lonely road. Got that bug now. Drives round a whole lot all alone looking for the car to go blooey and a lovely stranger to happen along and fix it for her that turns out to be a duke or something in disguise. Sickening!

"Two years ago she got confidential one night and told me she was going to Italy some day and get carried off to a cave by a handsome bandit in spite of her struggles. Yes, she would struggle—not! Talk about mental hazards, she's one, all right! She'll make it lively for that family some day. With Harvey D. depending on me a lot, I'm expecting to have no end of trouble with her when she gets to going good. Of course she's only a kid now, but you can plot her curve easy. One of these kind that'll say one thing and mean another. And wild? Like that time when she started to run off and found us in the graveyard—remember?"

They laughed about this, rehearsing that far-off day with its vicissitudes and sudden fall of wealth.

"That was the first day the Whipples noticed me," said Merle. "I made such a good impression on them they decided to take me."

At another time they talked of their future. Wilbur was hazy about his own. He was going to wait and see. Merle was happily definite.

"I'll tell you," said he when they had played out the last

hole one day, "it's like this. I feel the need to express my best thoughts in writing, so I've decided to become a great writer—you know, take up literature. I don't mean poetry or muck of that sort—serious literature. Of course Harvey D. talks about my taking charge of the Whipple interests, but I'll work him round. Big writers are somebody—not bankers and things like that. You could be the biggest kind of a banker, and people would never know it or think much about it. Writers are different. They get all kinds of notice. I don't know just what branch of writing I'll take up first, but I'll find out at college. Anyway, not mucky stories about a handsome stranger coming along just because a girl's car busts down. I'll pick out something dignified, you bet!"

"I bet you will," said his admiring brother. "I bet you'll get a lot of notice."

"Oh"—Merle waved an assenting hand—"naturally, after I get started good."

CHAPTER XIII

ON A certain morning in early September Wilbur Cowan idled on River Street, awaiting a summons. The day was sunny and spacious, yet hardly, he thought, could it contain his new freedom. Despairing groups of half-grown humans, still in slavery, hastened by him to their hateful tasks. He watched them pityingly, and when the dread bell rang, causing stragglers to bound forward in a saving burst of speed, he halted leisurely in sheer exultation. The ecstasy endured a full five minutes, until a last tap of the bell tolled the knell of the tardy. It had been worth waiting for. This much of his future he had found worth planning. He pictured the unfortunates back in the old room, breathing chalk dust, vexed with foolish problems, tormented by discipline. He was never again to pass a public school save with a sensation of shuddering relief. He had escaped into his future, and felt no concern about what it should offer him. It was enough to have escaped.

Having savoured freedom another ten minutes, he sauntered over to the *Advance* office as a favour to Sam Pickering. A wastrel printer had the night before been stricken with the wanderlust, deciding at five-thirty to take the six-fifty-eight for other fields of endeavour, and Wilbur Cowan had graciously consented to bridge a possible gap.

He strolled into the dusty, disordered office and eased the worry from Sam Pickering's furrowed brow by attacking the linotype in spirited fashion. That week he ran off the two editions of the paper. A spotted small boy sat across the press bed from him to ink the forms. He confided impressively to this boy that when the last paper was printed

the bronze eagle would flap its wings three times and scream as a signal for beer to be brought from Vielhaber's. The boy widened eyes of utter belief upon him, and Wilbur Cowan once more felt all his years. But he was still lamentably indecisive about his future, and when a new printer looked in upon the *Advance* he stepped aside. Whatever he was going to make of himself it wouldn't be someone who had to sit down indoors. He would be slave to no linotype until they were kept in the open. He told Sam Pickering this in so many words.

The former Mansion's stable at length engaged his wandering fancy. The stable's old swinging sign—a carefully painted fop with flowing side whiskers and yellow topcoat swiftly driving a spirited horse to a neat red-wheeled runabout—had been replaced by First-Class Garage. Of its former activities remained only three or four sedate horses to be driven by conservatives; and Starling Tucker, who lived, but lived in the past, dazed and unbelieving—becoming vivacious only in speech, beginning, "I remember when——"

These memories dealt with a remote time, when a hawse was a hawse, and you couldn't have it put all over you by a lot of slick young smarties that could do a few things with a monkey wrench. Starling, when he thus discoursed, sat chiefly in the little office before the rusty stove, idly flicking his memory with a buggy whip from the rack above his head, where reposed a dozen choice whips soon to become mere museum pieces.

Wilbur's connection with this thriving establishment was both profitable and entertaining. Judge Penniman divined the truth of it.

"He don't work—he just plays!"

He played with disordered motors and unerringly put them right. But he seemed to lack steadiness of purpose. He would leave an ailing car to help out Sam Pickering, or he would leave for a round of golf with Sharon Whipple, Sharon complaining that other people were nothing but dog-

goned golf lawyers; and he would insist upon time off at three o'clock each afternoon to give Spike Brennon his work-out. Spike had laboured to develop other talent in Newbern, but with ill success. When you got 'em learned a little about the game they acted like a lot of sissies over a broken nose or a couple of front teeth out or something. What he wanted was lads that would get the beak straightened, pretty near as good as new, or proper gold ones put in, and come back looking for more trouble. Wilbur Cowan alone he had found dependable.

Even so, the monotony of mere car repairing began to irk him. It was then he formed a pleasant alliance with old Porter Howgill, whose repair shop was across the street from the First-Class Garage. Porter's swinging sign, weathered and ancient like that of the Mansion's stable, said in bold challenge, "Ask me! I do everything!" And once Porter had done everything. Now there were a number of things he couldn't do, even when asked. He was aging and knotted with rheumatism, and his failing eyes did not now suffice for many of the nicer jobs.

Wilbur Cowan came to him and, even as had Porter in the days when the sign was bright, did everything. It was a distinct relief to puzzle over a sewing machine after labouring with too easily diagnosed motor troubles, or to restore a bit of marquetry in a table, or play at a feat of locksmithing. The First-Class Garage urged him to quit fiddling round and become its foreman, but this glittering offer he refused. It was too much like settling down to your future.

"Got his father's vagabond blood in his veins," declared Judge Penniman. "Crazy, too, like his father. You can't tell me Dave Cowan was in his right mind when the Whipples offered, in so many words, to set him up in any business he wanted to name, and pay all expenses, and he spurned 'em like so much dirt beneath his heel. Acted like a crazy loon is what I say, and this Jack-of-all-trades is showing the strain. Mark my words, they'll both end their days in a madhouse!"

No one did mark his words. Not even Winona, to whom they were uttered with the air of owlish, head-snapping wisdom which marked so many of the invalid's best things. She was concerned only with the failure of Wilbur to select a seemly occupation. His working dress was again careless; he reeked with oil, and his hands—hard, knotty hands—seemed to be permanently grimed. Even Lyman Teaford managed his thriving flour and feed business, with a butter and eggs and farm produce department, in the garments of a gentleman. True, he often worked with his coat off, but he removed his cuffs and carefully protected the sleeves of his white shirt with calico oversleeves held in place by neat elastics. Once away from the store he might have been anybody—even a banker.

Winona sought to enlist Lyman's help in the matter of Wilbur's future. Lyman was flaccid in the matter. The boy had once stolen into the Penniman parlour while Lyman and Winona were out rifling the ice box of delicacies, and enticed by the glitter of Lyman's flute had thrillingly taken it into his hands to see what made it go, dropping it in his panic, from the centre table to the floor, when he heard their returning steps. Lyman had never felt the same toward Wilbur after that. Now, even under the blandishments of Winona, he was none too certain that he would make a capable flour and feed merchant. Wilbur himself, to whom the possibility was broached, proved all too certain that he would engage in no mercantile pursuit whatever; surely none in which he might be associated ever so remotely with Lyman Teaford, whom for no reason he had always viewed with profound dislike. This incident closed almost before it opened.

Winona again approached Sharon Whipple in Wilbur's behalf. But Sharon was not enough depressed by the circumstance that Wilbur's work was hard on clothes, or that tasks were chosen at random and irregularly toiled at.

"Let him alone," advised Sharon. "Pretty soon he'll harden and settle. Besides, he's getting his education. He ain't educated yet."

"Education?" demanded Winona, incredulous. "But he's left school!"

"He'll get it out of school. Only kind ever I got. He's educating himself every day. Never mind his clothes. Right clothes are only right when they fit your job. Give the boy a chance to find himself. He's still young, Buck is—still in the gristle."

Winona winced at "gristle." It seemed so physiological—almost coarse.

A year went by in which Wilbur was perforce left to his self-education, working for Porter Howgill or at the garage or for Sam Pickering as he listed. "I'm making good money," was his steady rejoinder to Winona's hectoring.

"As if money were everything," wrote Winona in her journal, where she put the case against him.

Then when she had ceased to hope better things for him Wilbur Cowan seemed to waken. There were signs and symptoms Winona thus construed. He became careful in his attire, bought splendid new garments. His lean, bold jaw was almost daily smoothed by the razor of Don Paley, and Winona discovered a flask of perfume on his bureau in the little house. The label was Heart of Flowers. It was perhaps a more florid essence than Winona would have chosen, having a downright vigour of assertion that left one in no doubt of its presence; but it was infinitely superior to the scent of machine oil or printer's ink which had far too often betrayed the boy's vicinity.

Now, too, he wore his young years with a new seriousness; was more restrained of speech, with intervals of apparently lofty meditation. Winona rejoiced at these evidences of an awakening soul. The boy might after all some day become one of the better sort. She felt sure of this when he sought her of his own free will and awkwardly invited her to beautify his nails. He who had aforetime submitted to the ordeal under protest; who had sworn she should never again so

torture him! Surely he was striving at last to be someone people would care to meet.

Poor Winona did not dream that a great love had come into Wilbur Cowan's life; a deep and abiding love that bathed all his world in colourful radiance and moved him to those surface elegances for which all her own pleading had been in vain. Not even when he asked her one night—while she worked with buffer and orange-wood stick—if she believed in love at first sight did she suspect the underlying dynamics, the true inebriating factor of this reform. He put the query with elaborate and deceiving casualness, having cleared a road to it with remarks upon a circumspect historical romance that Winona had read to him; and she had merely said that she supposed it often did happen that way, though it were far better that true love come gently into one's life, based upon a profound mutual respect and esteem which would endure through long years of wedded life.

Wilbur had questioned this, but so cautiously and quite impersonally that Winona could not suspect his interest in the theme to be more than academic. She believed she had convinced him that love at first sight, so-called, is not the love one reads about in the better sort of literature. She was not alarmed—not even curious. In her very presence the boy had trifled with his great secret and she had not known!

So continuously had Winona dwelt in the loftier realms of social and spiritual endeavour, it is doubtful if she knew that an organization known as the Friday Night Social Club was doing a lot to make life brighter for those of Newbern's citizens who were young and sportive and yet not precisely people of the better sort. In the older days of the town, when Winona was twenty, there was but one social set. Now she was thirty, and there were two sets. She knew the town had grown; one nowadays saw strange people that one did not know, even many one would not care to know. If she had been told that the Friday Night Social Club met weekly in Knights of Pythias Hall to dance those sinister new dances that the city papers were so outspoken about she

would have considered it an affair of the underworld, about which the less said the letter. Had it been disclosed to her that Wilbur Cowan, under the chaperonage of Edward—Spike—Brennon, 133 lbs., ringside, had become an addict of these affairs, a determined and efficient exponent of the weird new steps—"a good thing for y'r footwork," Spike had said—she would have considered he had plumbed the profoundest depths of social ignominy. Yet so it was. Each Friday night he danced. He liked it, and while he disported himself from the lightest of social motives love came to him; the world was suddenly a place of fixed rainbows, and dancing—with her—no longer a gladsome capering, but a holy rite.

On a certain Friday evening unstarred by any portent she had burst upon his yielding eyes. Instantly he could have told Winona more than she would ever know about love at first sight. A creature of rounded beauty, peerlessly blonde, her mass of hair elaborately coifed and bound about her pale brow with a fillet of sable velvet. He saw her first in the dance, sumptuously gowned, regal, yet blithe, yielding as might a goddess to the mortal embrace of Bill Bardin as they fox-trotted to the viol's surge. He was stricken dumb until the dance ended. Then he gripped an arm of Spike Brennon, who had stood by him against the wall, "looking 'em over," as Spike had put it.

"Look!" he urged in tones hushed to the wonder of her. Spike had looked.

"Gee!" breathed the stricken one mechanically. He would not have chosen the word, but it formed a vent for his emotion.

"Bleached blonde," said Spike after a sharper scrutiny of the fair one, who now coquetted with a circle of gallants.

"Isn't she?" exclaimed the new lover, admiringly.

With so golden a result to dazzle him, was he to quarrel pettishly with the way it had been wrought?

"Do you suppose I could be introduced to her?" demanded Wilbur, timidly.

This marked the depth of his passion. He was too good a dancer to talk such nonsense ordinarily.

"Surest thing you know," said Spike. "Could you be introduced to her? In a split second! Come on!"

"But you don't know her yourself?" Wilbur hung back.

"Stop your kiddin'!"

Spike half dragged his fearful charge across the floor, not too subtly shouldered a way between Bill Bardin and Terry Stamper, bowed gracefully to the strange beauty, and said, "Hello, sister! Shake hands with my friend, Kid Cowan."

"Pleased to meet you!" She smiled graciously upon Wilbur and extended a richly jewelled hand, which he timidly pressed. Then she turned to Spike Brennon. "I know your name, all right," she declared. "You're that Mister Fresh we hear so much about—giving introductions to parties you ain't met yourself."

Wilbur Cowan blushed for Spike's *faux pas*, looking to see him slink off abashed, but there were things he had yet to learn about his friend.

"Just for that," said Spike, "I'll take this dance with you." And brazenly he encircled her waist as the music came anew.

"It's hot to-night," said Wilbur very simply to Terry Stamper and Bill Bardin as they moved off the floor to an open window.

His dancing eyes followed Beauty in the dance, and he was at her side when the music ceased. Until it came again he fanned by an open window her flushed and lovely face. Her name was Pearl.

"I wish this night would last forever," he murmured to her.

"Tut, tut!" said Pearl in humorous dismay, "and me having to be at business at seven G.M!"

Only then did he learn that she was not a mere social butterfly, but one of the proletariat; that, in truth, she waited on table at the Mansion. Instantly he constructed their future together. He would free her from that life of toil.

"You're too beautiful for work like that," he told her.

Pearl eyed him with sudden approval.

"You're all right, kid. I often said the same thing myself, but no one's fell for it up to date."

They danced, and again they danced.

"You're the nicest boy in the bunch," murmured Pearl.

"I never saw any one so beautiful," said Wilbur.

Pearl smiled graciously. "I love the sound of your voice," she said.

She was wrested from him by Bill Bardin. When he would have retrieved her Terry Stamper had secured her notice. So through another dance he stood aloof against the wall, moody now. It might be only social finesse in Pearl but she was showing to others the same pleased vivacity she had shown to him. Could it be she did not yet understand? Had she possibly not divined that they two were now forever apart from the trivial world? They danced again.

"Don't you feel as if we'd always known each other?" he demanded.

"Sure, kid!" breathed Pearl.

It was after still another dance—she had meantime floated in the arms of a mere mill foreman. This time he led her into the dusky hallway, where open windows brought the cool night to other low-voiced couples. He led her to the farthest window, where the shadow was deepest, and they looked out—above the roof of Rapp Brothers, Jewellery—to a sky of pale stars and a blond moon.

"Ain't it great?" said Pearl.

He stood close to her, trembling from the faintest contact with her loveliness. He wished to kiss her—he must kiss her. But he was afraid. Pearl was sympathetic. She divined his trouble, and in the deep shadow she adroitly did it herself. Then she rebuked his boldness.

"Say, but you're the quick little worker, seems to me!"

For a moment he was incapable of speech, standing mute, her warm hand in his.

"It's been like a dream," he managed at last. "Just like a dream! Now you belong to me, don't you?"

"Sure, if you want to put it that way," said Pearl. "Come on! there's the music again."

At the door she was taken from him by the audacious mill foreman. Wilbur was chilled. Pearl had instantly recovered her public, or ballroom, manner. Could it be that she had not been rightly uplifted by the greatness of their moment? Did she realize all it would mean to them? But she was meltingly tender when at last they swayed in the waltz to "Home, Sweet Home." And it was he who bore her off under the witching moon to the side entrance of the Mansion. They lingered a moment in the protecting shadows. Pearl was chatty—not sufficiently impressed, it seemed to him, with the sweet gravity of this crisis.

"We're engaged now," he reminded her. Pearl laughed lightly.

"Have it your own way, kid! Wha'd you say your name was?"

She kissed him again. Then he wandered off in the mystic night, far over a world reeling through golden moonshine, to reach his dark but glowing little room at an hour that would have disquieted Winona. It was the following day that he cheered her by displaying a new attention to his apparel, and it was before the ensuing Friday night dance that he had submitted his hands to her for embellishment—talking casually of love at first sight.

There followed for him a time of fearful delight, not unmarred by spells of troubled wonder. Pearl was not exclusively enough his. She danced with other men; she chatted with them as with her peers. She seemed even to encourage their advances. He would have preferred that she found these repulsive, but she continued gay, even hard, under his chiding.

"Tut, tut! I been told I got an awfully feminine nature. A girl of my type is bound to have gentleman friends," she protested.

He aged under this strain. He saw now that he must abandon his easy view about his future. He must, indeed, plan his life. He must choose his vocation, follow it grimly, with one end in view. Pearl must become his in the sight

of God and man—especially man—with the least delay. He delighted Sam Pickering by continuing steadily at the linotype for five consecutive weeks, while business piled up at the First-Class Garage and old Porter Howgill was asked vainly to do everything.

Then on a fateful night Lyman Teaford assumed a new and disquieting value in his life. Lyman Teaford, who for a dozen years had gone with Winona Penniman faithfully if not spectacularly; Lyman Teaford, dignified and genteel, who belonged to Newbern's better set, had one night appeared at an affair of the Friday Night Social Club. Perhaps because he had reached the perilous forties he had suddenly determined to abandon the safe highway and seek adventure in miry bypaths. Perhaps he felt that he had austerely played the flute too long. At any rate, he came and danced with the lower element of Newbern, not oftener with Pearl than with others that first night. But he came again and danced much oftener with Pearl. There was no quick, hot alarm in the breast of Wilbur Cowan. Lyman Teaford was an old man, chiefly notable, in Wilbur's opinion, for the remarkable fluency of his Adam's apple while—with chin aloft—he played high notes on his silver flute.

Yet dimly at last he felt discomfort at Lyman's crude persistence with Pearl. He danced with others now only when Pearl was firm in refusals. Wilbur to her jested with venomous sarcasm at the expense of Lyman. Women were difficult to understand, he thought. What could her motive be?

The drama, Greek in its severity, culminated with a hideous, a sickening velocity. On a Monday morning, in but moderate torment at Pearl's inconsistency, Wilbur Cowan sat at the linotype in the *Advance* office, swiftly causing type metal to become communicative about the week's doings in Newbern. He hung a finished sheet of Sam Pickering's pencilled copy on a hook, and casually surveyed the sheet beneath. It was a social item, he saw—the notice of a marriage. Then names amazingly leaped from it to sear his defenseless eyes. Lyman Teaford—Miss Pearl King! He gasped and looked

about him. The familiar routine of the office was under way. In his little room beyond he could see Sam Pickering scribbling other items. He constrained himself to read the monstrous slander before him.

"Lyman N. Teaford, one of our best-known business men, was last evening united in the bonds of holy wedlock to Miss Pearl King, for some months employed at the Mansion House. The marriage service was performed by the Reverend Mallett at the parsonage, and was attended by only a few chosen friends. The happy pair left on the six-fifty-eight for a brief honeymoon at Niagara Falls, and on their return will occupy the Latimer mansion on North Oak Street, recently purchased by the groom in view of his approaching nuptials. A wide circle of friends wish them all happiness."

Wilbur Cowan again surveyed the office, and again peered sharply in at Sam Pickering. His first wild thought was that Sam had descended to a practical joke. If so it was a tasteless proceeding. But he must be game. It was surely a joke, and Sam and the others in the office would be watching him for signs of anguish. His machine steadily clicked off the item. He struck not one wrong letter. He hung the sheet of copy on its hook and waited for the explosion of crude humour. He felt that his impassive demeanour had foiled the mean intention. But no one regarded him. Sam Pickering wrote on. Terry Stamper stolidly ran off cards on the job press. They were all indifferent. Something told him it was not a joke.

He finished the next sheet of copy. Then, when he was certain he had not been jested with, he rose from the torturing machine, put on his coat, and told Sam Pickering he had an engagement. Sam hoped it wouldn't keep him from work that afternoon.

Wilbur said "Possibly not," though he knew he would now loathe the linotype forever.

"By the way"—he managed it jauntily, as Sam bent again over his pad of yellow copy paper—"I see Lyme Teaford's name is going to be in print this week."

Sam paused in his labour and chuckled.

"Yes, the old hard-shell is landed. That blonde hasn't been bringing him his three meals a day all this time for nothing."

"She must have married him for his money," Wilbur heard himself saying in cold, cynical tones. The illumining thought had just come. That explained it.

"Sure," agreed Sam. "Why wouldn't she?"

Late that afternoon, in the humble gymnasium at the rear of Pegleg McCarron's, Spike Brennon emerged from a rally in which Wilbur Cowan had displayed unaccustomed spirit. Spike tenderly caressed his nose with a glove and tried to look down upon it. The swelling already showed to his oblique gaze.

"Say, kid," he demanded, irritably, "what's the big idea? Is this murder or jest a friendly bout? You better behave or I'll stop pullin' my punches."

It could not be explained to the aggrieved Spike that his opponent had for the moment convinced himself that he faced one of Newbern's best-known business men.

Later he contented himself with observing Lyman Teaford at Niagara Falls. The fatuous groom stood heedlessly at the cataract's verge. There was a simple push, and the world was suddenly a better place to live in. As for his bereaved mate—he meditated her destruction, also, but this was too summary. It came to him that she had been a lovely and helpless victim of circumstances. For he had stayed on with Spike through the evening, and in a dearth of custom Spike, back of the bar, had sung in a whining tenor, "For she's only a bird in a gilded cage——"

That was it. She had discarded him because he was penniless—had sold herself to be a rich man's toy. She would pay for it in bitter anguish.

"Only a bird in a gilded cage," sang Spike again. An encore had been urged.

At noon the following day Winona Penniman, a copy of

the *Advance* before her, sat at the Penniman luncheon table staring dully into a dish of cold rice pudding. She had read again and again the unbelievable item. At length she snapped her head, as Spike Brennon would when now and again a clean blow reached his jaw, pushed the untouched dessert from her with a gesture of repugnance, and went aloft to her own little room. Here she sat at her neat desk of bird's eye maple, opened her journal, and across a blank page wrote in her fine, firm hand, "What Life Means to Me."

It had seemed to her that it meant much. She would fill many pages. The name of Lyman Teaford would not there appear, yet his influence would be continuously present. She was not stricken as had been another reader of that fateful bit of news. But she was startled, feeling herself perilously cast afloat from old moorings. She began bravely and easily, with a choice literary flavour.

"My sensations may be more readily imagined than described."

This she found true. She could imagine them readily, but could not, in truth, describe them. She was shocked to discern that for the first time in her correct life there were distinctly imagined sensations which she could not bring herself to wórd, even in a volume forever sacred to her own eyes. A long time she sat imagining. At last she wrote, but the words seemed so petty.

All apparently that life meant to her was "How did she do it?"

She stared long at this. Then followed, as if the fruit of her further meditation: "There is a horrid bit of slang I hear from time to time—can it be that I need more pepper?"

After this she took from the bottom drawer of her bureau that long-forgotten gift from the facetious Dave Cowan. She held the stockings of tan silk before her, testing their fineness, their sheerness. She was still meditating. She snapped her dark head, perked it as might a puzzled wren.

"Certainly, more pepper!" she murmured.

CHAPTER XIV

A WORLD once considered of enduring stability had crashed fearsomely about the ears of Winona Penniman and Wilbur Cowan. After this no support was to be trusted, however seemingly stout. Old foundations had crumbled, old institutions perished, the walls of Time itself lay wrecked. They stared across the appalling desolation with frightened eyes. What next? In a world to be ruined at a touch, like a house of cards, what vaster ruin would ensue?

It did not shock Wilbur Cowan that nations should plunge into another madness the very day after a certain fair one, mentioned in his meditations as "My Pearl—My Pearl of great price," and eke—from the perfume label—"My Heart of Flowers," had revealed herself but a mortal woman with an eye for the good provider. It occasioned Winona not even mild surprise that the world should abondon itself to hideous war on the very day after Lyman Teaford had wed beyond the purple. It was awful, yet somehow fitting. Anything less than a World War would have appeared inconsequent, anti-climactic, to these two so closely concerned in the preliminary catastrophe, and yet so reticent that neither ever knew the other's wound. Wilbur Cowan may have supposed that the entire Penniman family, Winona included, would rejoice that no more forever were they to hear the flute of Lyman Teaford. Certainly Winona never suspected that a mere boy had been desolated by woman's perfidy and Lyman's mad abandonment of all that people of the better sort most prize.

Other people, close observers of world events, declared that no real war would ensue; it would be done in a few days—

a few weeks at most. But Winona and Wilbur knew better. Now anything could happen—and would. Of all Newbern's wise folk these two alone foresaw the malign dimensions of the inevitably approaching cataclysm. They would fall grimly silent in the presence of conventional optimists. They knew the war was to be unparalleled for blood and tears, but they allowed themselves no more than sinister, vague prophecies, for they could not tell how they knew.

And they saw themselves active in war. They lost no time in doing that. The drama of each drew to a splendid climax with the arrival in Newbern of a French officer—probably a general—bound upon a grave mission. Wilbur's general came to seek out the wife of Lyman Teaford.

To her he said in choice English: "Madame, I bring you sad news. This young man died gallantly on the field of battle—the flag of my country was about to be captured by the enemy when he leaped bravely forward, where no other would dare the storm of shot and shell, and brought the precious emblem safely back to our battle line. But even as the cheers of his comrades rang in his ears an enemy bullet laid him low. I sprang to his side and raised his head. His voice was already weak, for the bullet had found rest in his noble heart.

"'Tell her,' he breathed, 'that she sent me to my death so that she might become only a bird in a gilded cage. But tell her also that I wish her happiness in her new life.' Madame, he died there, while weeping soldiers clustered about with hats off and heads bowed—died with your name on his pale lips—'My Pearl of great price,' he whispered, and all was over. I bring you this photograph, which to the last he wore above his heart. Observe the bullet hole and those dark stains that discolour your proud features."

Whereupon Mrs. Lyman Teaford would fall fainting to the floor and never again be the same woman, bearing to her grave a look of unutterable sadness, even amid the splendours of the newly furnished Latimer residence on North Oak Street.

Winona's drama was less depressing. Possibly Winona at thirty-two had developed a resilience not yet achieved by Wilbur at twenty. She was not going to die upon a field of battle for any Lyman Teaford. She would brave dangers, however. She saw herself in a neat uniform, searching a battlefield strewn with the dead and wounded. To the latter she administered reviving cordial from a minute cask suspended at her trim waist by a cord. Shells burst about her, but to these she paid no heed. It was thus the French officer—a mere lieutenant, later promoted for gallantry under fire—first observed her. He called her an angel of mercy, and his soldiers—rough chaps, but hearty and outspoken—cheered her as La Belle Americaine.

So much for the war. But the French officer—a general now, perhaps with one arm off—came to Newbern to claim his bride. He had been one of the impetuous sort that simply would not take no for an answer. The wedding was in the Methodist church, and was a glittering public function. The groom was not only splendidly handsome in a French way, but wore a shining uniform, and upon his breast sparkled a profusion of medals. A vast crowd outside the church waited to cheer the happy couple, and slinking at the rear of this was a drab Lyman Teaford—without medals, without uniform, dull, prosaic, enduring at this moment pangs of the keenest remorse for his hasty act of a year before. He, too, would never be the same man again.

In truth, the beginning Teaford ménage lay under the most unfavourable portents. Things looked dark for it.

Yet despite the forebodings of Wilbur and Winona, it began to be suspected, even by them, that the war would wear itself out, as old Doctor Purdy said, by first intention. And in spite of affecting individual dramas they began to feel that it must wear itself out with no help from them. It seemed to have settled into a quarrel among foreign nations with which we could rightfully have no concern. Winona learned, too, that her picture of the nurse on a battlefield administering cordial to wounded combatants from the

small keg at her waist was based upon an ancient and doubtless always fanciful print.

Wilbur, too, gathered from the newspapers that, though he might die upon a battlefield, there was little chance that a French general would be commissioned to repeat his last words to Mrs. Lyman Teaford of Newbern Center. He almost decided that he would not become a soldier. Some years before, it is true, he had been drawn to the life by a government poster, designed by one who must himself have been a capable dramatist.

"Join the Army and See the World," urged the large-lettered legend above the picture.

The latter revealed an entrancing tropical scene with graceful palms adorning the marge of a pinkly sun-kissed sea. At a table in the background two officers consulted with a private above an important-looking map, while another pleased-looking private stood at attention near by. At the left foreground a rather obsequious-looking old colonel seemed to be entreating a couple of spruce young privates to drop round for tea that afternoon and meet the ladies.

Had Wilbur happened upon this poster in conjunction with the resolve of Miss Pearl King to be sensible, it is possible his history might have been different. But its promise had faded from his memory ere his life was wrecked. He felt now merely that he ought to settle down to something. Even Sharon Whipple plainly told him so. He said it was all right to knock about from one thing to another while you were still in the gristle. Up to twenty a boy's years were kind of yeasty and uncertain, and if he was any way self-headed he ought to be left to run. But after twenty he lost his pinfeathers and should begin to think about things.

So Wilbur began to think about things. He continued to do everything that old Porter Howgill was asked to do, to repair cars for the Mansion garage, and to be a shield and buckler to Sam Pickering in time of need. The *Advance* office became freshly attractive at this time, because Sam had installed a wonderful new power press to print the paper

daily; for the *Advance*, as Sam put it, could be found ever in the van of progress.

The new press had innermost secrets of structure that were presently best known to Wilbur Cowan. No smeared small boy was required to ink its forms and no surmounting bronze eagle was reported to scream for beer when the last paper was run off. Even Dave Cowan, drifting in from out of the nowhere—in shoes properly describable as only memories of shoes—said she was a snappy little machine, and applauded his son's easy mastery of it.

So the days of Wilbur were busy days, even if he had not settled far enough down to suit either Sam Pickering, Porter Howgill—who did everything, if asked—or the First-Class Garage. And the blight put upon him by a creature as false as she was beautiful proved not to be enduring. He was able, indeed, to behold her without a tremor, save of sympathy for one compelled to endure the daily proximity of Lyman Teaford.

But the war prolonged itself as only he and Winona had felt it would, and presently it began to be hinted that a great nation, apparently unconcerned with its beginning, might eventually be compelled to a livelier interest in it. Herman Vielhaber was a publicly exposed barometer of this sentiment. At the beginning he beamed upon the world and predicted the Fatherland's speedy triumph over all the treacherous foes. When the triumph was unaccountably delayed he appeared mysterious, but not less confident. The Prussian system might involve delay, but Prussian might was none the less invincible. Herman would explain the Prussian system freely to all who cared to listen—and many did attentively—from high diplomacy to actual fighting. He left many of his hearers with a grateful relief that neutrality had been officially enjoined upon them.

Later Herman beamed less brightly as he recounted tales of German prowess. He came to exhibit a sort of indignant pity for the Fatherland, into whose way so many obstacles were being inopportunely thrown. He compared Germany

to a wounded deer that ravenous dogs were seeking to bring down, but his predictions of her ultimate victory were not less confident. Minna Vielhaber wept back of the bar at Herman's affecting picture of the stricken deer with the arrow in her flank, and would be comforted only when he brought the war to a proper close.

It was at this time that Winona wrote in her journal: "General Sherman said that war is the bad place. He knew."

It was also at this time that a certain phrase from a high source briefly engaged the notice of Sharon Whipple.

"Guinea pigs," said he, "are also too proud to fight, but they ain't ever won the public respect on that account. They get treated accordingly."

It was after this that Sharon was heard ominously to wish that he were thirty or forty years younger. And it was after this that Winona became active as a promoter of bazaars for ravaged Belgium and a pacifist whose watchword was "Resist not evil!" She wrote again in her journal: "If only someone would reason calmly with them!" She presently became radiant with hope, for a whole boatload of earnest souls went over to reason calmly with the combatants.

But the light she had seen proved deceiving. The earnest souls went forward, but for some cause, never fully revealed to Winona, they had been unable to reason calmly with those whose mad behaviour they had meant to correct. It was said that they had been unable to reason calmly even among themselves. It was merely a mark of Winona's earnestness that she felt things might have gone differently had the personnel of this valiant embassy been enlarged to include herself. Meantime, war was becoming more and more the bad place, just as General Sherman had said. She had little thought now for silk stockings or other abominations of the frivolous, for her own country seemed on the very verge of committing a frightful error.

Some time had elapsed since Wilbur Cowan definitely knew that he would never go to war because of the mother

of Lyman Teaford's infant son. He began to believe, however, that he would relish a bit of fighting for its own sake. Winona reasoned with him as she would have reasoned with certain high personages on the other side of the water, and perhaps with as little success. He replied cryptically that he was an out-and-out phagocyte, and getting more so every time he read a newspaper. Winona winced at the term—it seemed to carry sinister implications. Where did the boy hear such words?

This one he had heard on a late Sunday afternoon when he sat, contrary to a municipal ordinance of Newbern, in the back room of Herman Vielhaber, with certain officials sworn to uphold that ordinance, who drank beer and talked largely about what we should do; for it had then become shockingly apparent that the phrase about our being too proud to fight had been, in its essential meaning, misleading. Dave Cowan, citizen of the world and student of its structure, physical and social, had proved that war, however regrettable, was perhaps never to be avoided; that in any event one of the best means to avoid it was to be known for your fighting ways. Anyway, war was but an incident in human progress.

Dave's hair had thinned in the years of his wandering to see a man at Seattle or New Orleans, and he now wore spectacles, without which he could no longer have enlarged his comprehension of cosmic values, for his latest Library of Universal Knowledge was printed in very small type. Dave said that since the chemicals had got together to form life everything had lived on something else, and the best livers had always been the best killers. He did not pretend to justify the plan, but there it was; and it worked the same whether it was one microscopic organism preying on another or a bird devouring a beetle or Germany trying to swallow the world. Rapp, Senior, said that was all very well, but these pacifists would keep us out of war yet. Doctor Purdy, with whom he had finished a game of pinochle—Herman Vielhaber had lately been unable to keep his mind on the game—set down his beer stein in an authoritative manner,

having exploded with rage even while he swallowed some of the last decent beer to come to Newbern Center. He wiped froth from his waistcoat.

"Pacifists!" he stormed. "Why don't they ever look into their own bodies? They couldn't live a day on non-resistance to evil. Every one of their bodies is thronged with fighting soldiers. Every pacifist is a living lie. Phagocytes, that's what they are—white corpuscles—and it's all they're there for. They believe in preparedness hard enough. See 'em march up to fight when there's an invasion! And how they do fight! These pacifists belie their own construction. They're built on a fight from the cradle and before that.

"I wish more of their own phagocytes would begin to preach non-resistance and try to teach great moral lessons to invading germs. We wouldn't have to listen to so many of 'em. But phagocytes don't act that way. They keep in training. They don't say, like that poor old maunderer I read this morning, that there's no use preparing—that a million phagocytes will spring to arms overnight if their country's invaded. They keep in trim. They fight quick. If they didn't we wouldn't be here."

"These phagocytes—is infantry, yes?" demanded Herman Vielhaber. "I never hear 'em named before like that."

"Infantry, and all the other branches, in a healthy body—and our own body is healthy. Watch our phagocytes come forward now, just as those tiny white corpuscles rush through the blood to an invaded spot. You'll see 'em come quick. Herman, your country has licked Belgium and Serbia—you can rightly claim that much. But she'll never get another decision. Too many phagocytes."

Dave Cowan, who always listened attentively to Doctor Purdy for new words, was thus enabled to enlighten Winona about her own and other people's phagocytes; and Winona, overwhelmed by his mass of detail—for Dave had supplemented Purdy's lecture with fuller information from his encyclopedia—had sighed and said: "Oh, dear! We seem to be living over a volcano!"

This had caused Dave to become more volubly instructive.

"Of course! Didn't you know that? How thick do you suppose the crust of the earth is, anyway? All we humans are—we're plants that have grown out of the cooled crust of a floating volcano; plants that can walk and talk, but plants just the same. We float round the sun, which is only another big volcano that hasn't cooled yet—good thing for us it hasn't—and the sun and us are floating round some other volcano that no one has discovered yet because the circle is too big, and that one is probably circling round another one—and there you are. That's plain, isn't it?"

"Not very," said Winona.

"Well, I admit there's a catch in it I haven't figured out yet, but the facts are right, as far as I've gone. Anyway, here we are, and we got here by fighting, and we'll have to keep on fighting, one way or another, if we're to get any place else."

"I don't know anything about all that," said Winona; "but sometimes I almost think the Germans deserve a good beating."

This was extreme for Winona, the arch pacifist.

"You almost think so, eh? Well, that's a good specimen of almost thinking. Because the Germans don't deserve any such thing unless someone can give it to them. If the bird can swallow the worm the bird deserves the worm. The most of us merely almost think."

It was much later—an age later, it seemed to Winona—for her country, as she wrote in her journal, had crossed the Rubicon—that she went to attend a meeting of protest in a larger city than Newbern; a meeting of mothers and potential mothers who were persuaded that war was never excusable.

She had listened to much impassioned oratory, with a sickening surprise that it should leave her half-hearted in the cause of peace at any price; and she had gone to take her train for home, troubled with a monstrous indecision. Never

before had she suffered an instant's bewilderment in detecting right from wrong.

As she waited she had observed on a siding a long, dingy train, from the windows of which looked the faces of boys. She was smitten with a quick curiosity. There were tall boys and short boys; and a few of them were plump, but mostly they were lean, with thin, browned faces, and they were all ominously uniformed. Their keen young faces crowded the open windows of the cars, and they thronged upon the platforms to make noisy purchases from younger boys who offered them pitiful confections from baskets and trays.

Winona stared at them with a sickened wonder. They were all so alive, so alert, so smiling, so eager to be on with the great adventure. In one of the cars a band of them roared a stirring chorus. It stirred Winona beyond the calm that should mark people of the better sort. She forgot that a gentleman should make no noise and that a lady is serene; forgot utterly. She waved a hand—timidly at first—to a cluster of young heads at a car window, and was a little dismayed when they waved heartily in return. She recovered and waved at another group—less timidly this time. Again the response was instant, and a malign power against which she strove in vain carried Winona to the train's side. Heads were thrust forth and greetings followed, some shy and low-toned, some with feigned man-of-the-world jauntiness.

Winona was no longer Winona. A freckled young vender with a basket halted beside her. Winona searched for her purse and emptied its hoard into one gloved hand. Coins spilled from this and ran about the platform. Hands sprang from the window above her to point out their resting places, and half a dozen of the creatures issued from the car to recover them for her. Flustered, eager, pleasantly shocked at her own daring, Winona distributed gifts from the basket, seeing only the hands that came forth to receive them.

Chewing gum, candy, popcorn, figs—even cigarettes—and Winona the first vice-president and recording secretary of

Newbern's anti-tobacco league! War was assuredly what Sherman had so pithily described it, for she now sent the vender back to replenish his stock of cigarettes, and bought and bestowed them upon immature boys so long as her coin lasted. Their laughter was noisy, their banter of one another and of Winona was continuous, and Winona laughed, even bantered. That she should banter strangers in a public place! She felt rowdy, but liked it.

There was a call from the front of the train, and the group about her sprang to the platform as the cars began to move, waving her gracious, almost condescending adieus, as happy people who go upon a wondrous journey will wave to poor stay-at-homes. Winona waved wildly now, being lost to all decorum; waved to the crowded platform and then to the cloud of heads at the window above her.

From this window a hand reached down to her—a lean, hard, brown hand—and the shy, smiling eyes of the boy who reached it sought hers in something like appeal. Winona clutched the hand and gripped it as she had never gripped a human hand before.

"Good-bye, sister!" said the boy, and Winona went a dozen steps with the train, still grasping the hand.

"Good-bye, good-bye, good-bye—all of you!" she called, and was holding the hand with both her own when the train gathered speed and took it from her grasp.

She stood then watching other windows thronged with young heads as the train bore them on; she still waved and was waved at. Faint strains of the resumed chorus drifted back to her. Her face was hurting with a set smile.

She stumbled back across the platform, avoiding other groups who had cheered the passing train, and found sanctuary by a baggage truck loaded with crates of live chickens. Here she wept unnoticed, and wondered why she was weeping. Later, in her own train, she looked down and observed the white-ribboned badge which she had valiantly pinned above her heart that very morning. She had forgotten the badge—and those boys must have seen it. Savagely she tore

it from its mooring, to the detriment of a new georgette waist, and dropped it from the open window.

That night she turned back in her journal to an early entry: "If only someone would reason calmly with them. Resist not evil!" She stared at this a long time, then she dipped a new pen in red ink and full across it she wrote "What rotten piffle!" That is, she nearly wrote those words. What she actually put down was "What r-tt-n piffle!"

To Wilbur Cowan, in recounting her fall from the serene heights of pacifism, she brazenly said: "Do you know—when that poor boy reached down to shake hands with me, if I could have got at him I just know I should have kissed him."

"Gee whiz!" said Wilbur in amazed tribute.

"I don't care!" persisted Winona. "That's the way I felt—he was such a nice boy. He looked like you, as if he'd come from a good home and had good habits, and I did want to kiss him, and I would have if I could have reached him—and I'm not going to tell a falsehood about it for any one, and I'm—I'm hostile."

"Well, I guess pretty soon I'll be going," said Wilbur.

Winona gazed at him with strangely shining eyes.

"You wouldn't be any good if you didn't!" she said, suddenly.

It was perhaps the least ornate sentence she had ever spoken.

"Gee whiz!" said Wilbur again. "You've changed!"

"Something came over me," said Winona.

CHAPTER XV

WILBUR COWEN had hesitated in the matter of war. He wanted to be in a battle—had glowed at the thought of fighting—but if the war was going to be stopped in its beginning, what would be the use of starting? And he was assured and more than half believed that it would be stopped. Merle Whipple was his informant—Merle had found himself. The war was to be stopped by the *New Dawn*, a magazine of which Merle had been associate editor since shortly after his release from college.

Merle, on that afternoon of golf with Wilbur, had accurately forecast his own future. Confessing then that he meant to become a great writer, he was now not only a great writer but a thinker, in the true sense of the word. He had taken up literature—"not muck like poetry, but serious literature"—and Whipple money had lavishly provided a smart little craft in which to embark. The money had not come without some bewildered questioning on the part of those supplying it. As old Sharon said, the Whipple chicken coop had hatched a gosling that wanted to swim in strange waters; but it was eventually decided that goslings were meant to swim and would one way or another find a pond. Indeed, Harvey Whipple was prouder of his son by adoption than he cared to have known, and listened to him with secret respect, covered with perfunctory business hints. He felt that Merle was above and beyond him. The youth, indeed, made him feel that he was a mere country banker.

In the city of New York, after his graduation, Merle had come into his own, forming a staunch alliance with a small circle of intellectuals—intelligientzia, Merle said—consecrated to the cause of American culture. He had brought

to Newbern and to the amazed Harvey Whipple the strange news that America had no native culture; that it was raw, spiritually impoverished, without national self-consciousness; with but the faintest traces of art in any true sense of the word. Harvey Whipple would have been less shocked by this disclosure, momentous though it was, had not Merle betrayed a conviction that his life work would now be to uphold the wavering touch of civilization.

This brought the thing home to Harvey D. Merle, heading his valiant little band of thinkers, would light a pure white flame to flush America's spiritual darkness. He would be a vital influence, teaching men and women to cultivate life for its own sake. For the cheap and tawdry extravagance of our national boasting he would substitute a chastening knowledge of our spiritual inferiority to the older nations. America was uncreative; he would release and nurse its raw creative intelligence till it should be free to function, breaking new intellectual paths, setting up lofty ideals, enriching our common life with a new, self-conscious art. Much of this puzzled Harvey D. and his father, old Gideon. It was new talk in their world. But it impressed them. Their boy was earnest, with a fine intelligence; he left them stirred.

Sharon Whipple was a silent, uneasy listener at many of these talks. He declared, later and to others, for Merle was not his son, that the young man was highly languageous and highly crazy; that his talk was the crackling of thorns under a pot; that he was a vain canter—"forever canting," said Sharon—"a buffle-headed fellow, talking, bragging." He was equally intolerant of certain of Merle's little band of forward-looking intellectuals who came to stay week-ends at the Whipple New Place. There was Emmanuel Schilsky, who talked more pithily than Merle and who would be the editor-in-chief of the projected *New Dawn*. Emmanuel, too, had come from his far-off home to flush America's spiritual darkness with a new light. He had written much about our shortage of genuine spiritual values; about "the continual frustrations and aridities of American life." He was a mem-

ber of various groups—the Imagist group, the Egoist group, the Sphericists, other groups piquantly named; versed in the new psychology, playing upon the word "pragmatism" as upon a violin.

Sharon Whipple, the Philistine, never quite knew whether pragmatism was approved or condemned by Schilsky, and once he asked the dark-faced young man what it meant. He was told that pragmatism was a method, and felt obliged to pretend that this enlightened him. He felt a reluctant respect for Schilsky, who could make him feel uncomfortable.

And there was the colourful, youngish widow, Mrs. Truesdale, who wrote free verse about the larger intimacies of life, and dressed noticeably. She would be a contributing editor of the *New Dawn*, having as her special department the release of woman from her age-long slavery to certain restraints that now made her talked unpleasantly about if she dared give her soul free rein. This lady caused Sharon to wonder about the departed Truesdale.

"Was he carried away by sorrowing friends," asked Sharon, "or did he get tired one day and move off under his own power?" No one ever enlightened him.

Others of the younger intelligentzia came under his biased notice. He spoke of them as "a rabble rout," who lived in a mad world—"and God bless us out of it."

But Sharon timed his criticism discreetly, and the *New Dawn* lit its pure white flame—a magazine to refresh the elect. Placed superbly beyond the need of catering to advertisers, it would adhere to rigorous standards of the true, the beautiful. It would tell the truth as no other magazine founded on gross commercialism would dare to do. It said so in well-arranged words. The commercial magazines full well knew the hideous truth, but stifled it for hire. The *New Dawn* would be honest.

The sinister truth about America as revealed in the initial number of the brave new venture was that America was crude, blatant, boastful, vulgar, and money-grubbing. We were without ideals beyond the dollar; without desires save those

to be glutted by material wealth. It was the high aim of the *New Dawn*—said the associate editor, Merle Dalton Whipple —to dethrone the dollar, to hasten and to celebrate the passing of American greed.

Not until the second number was it revealed that the arch criminals were to be found in the exploiting class, a sinister combination, all-powerful, working to the detriment of the common people; an industrial oligarchy under whose rule the cowed wage slave toiled for his crust of bread. This number unflinchingly indicted the capitalistic ruling class; fearlessly called upon the exploited masses to rise and throw off the yoke put upon them by this nefarious plunderbund. The worker's plight was depicted with no sparing of detail—"the slaves groaning and wailing in the dark the song of mastered men, the sullen, satanic music of lost and despairing humanity."

Succeeding numbers made it plain that the very republic itself had been founded upon this infamy. Our Revolutionary War had marked the triumph of the capitalistic state—the state that made property sovereign. The Revolutionary fathers had first freed themselves from English creditors, then bound down as their own debtors an increasing mass of the American population. The document known as the Constitution of the United States had been cunningly and knowingly contrived to that end, thus thrusting upon us the commercial oligarchy which persisted to this day. It had placed the moneyed classes securely in the saddle, though with fine phrases that seemed not to mean this.

"A conscious minority of wealthy men and lawyers, guided by the genius of Washington, Franklin, Hamilton, and Madison," had worked their full design upon the small farmer and the nascent proletariat; we had since been "under the cult and control of wealth."

After this ringing indictment it surprised no Whipple to read that we had become intolerant, materialistic, unæsthetic. Nor was it any wonder that we were "in no mood to brook religious or social dissension." With such a Constitution fraudulently foisted upon us by the money-loving

fathers of the Revolution, it was presumably not to be expected that we should exhibit the religious tolerance of contemporary Spain or Italy or France.

"Immersed in a life of crass material endeavour," small wonder that the American had remained in spiritual poverty of the most debasing sort until the *New Dawn* should come to enrich him, to topple in ruins an exploiting social system.

Now the keen eyes of young America, by aid of the magnifying lens supplied by Emmanuel Schilsky, would detect the land of the free to be in fact a land of greedy and unscrupulous tyrants; the home of the brave a home of economic serfs. Young America, which fights for the sanctity of life, solid and alive with virile beauty, would revolt and destroy the walls of the capitalistic state, sweeping away the foul laws that held private property sacred. They would seek a cure for the falsehood of modern life in a return to Nature, a return to the self where truth ever is. They would war with the privilege and ascendancy of the group over the individual conscience. Already the exploiting class, as it neared the term of its depleted life, was but a mass of purulence. Society was rotten, the state a pious criminal, the old truths tawdry lies. Everywhere the impotence of senility—except in young America. We faced the imminence of a vast breaking-up. The subtlest oligarchy of modern times was about to crumble. The revolution was at hand.

A succeeding number of the *New Dawn* let out the horrid truth about the war, telling it in simple words that even Wilbur Cowan could understand. Having sold munitions to the warring nations, we must go in to save our money. In short, as the *New Dawn* put it: "The capitalistic ruling classes tricked the people into war." It was to be a war waged for greed. Young America, not yet perusing in large enough numbers the *New Dawn*, was to be sent to its death that capital might survive—the dollar be still enthroned. But the *New Dawn* was going to see about that. Young America would be told the truth.

Two of the Whipples were vastly puzzled by these pronouncements, and not a little disquieted. Old Gideon and Harvey D. began to wonder if by any chance their boy, with his fine intellect, had not been misled. Sharon was enraged by the scandalous assertions about George Washington, whom he had always considered a high-minded patriot. He had never suspected and could not now be persuaded that Washington had basely tricked the soldiers of the Revolution into war so that the capitalistic class might prevail in the new states. Nor would he believe that the framers of the Constitution had consciously worded that document with a view to enslaving the common people. He was a stubborn old man, and not aware of his country's darkness. Perhaps it was too much to expect that one of his years and mental habit should be hospitable to these newly found truths.

He was not young America. He had thought too long the other way. Being of a choleric cast, he would at times be warmed into regrettable outbursts of opinion that were reactionary in the extreme. Thus when he discussed with Gideon and Harvey D. the latest number of the magazine—containing the fearless exposure of Washington's chicanery—he spoke in terms most slighting of Emmanuel Schilsky. He meant his words to lap over to Merle Whipple, but as the others were still proud—if in a troubled way—of the boy's new eminence, he did not distinguish him too pointedly. He pretended to take it all out on Emmanuel, whom he declared to be no fair judge of American history. The other Whipples were beginning to suspect this but were not prepared to admit it either to Sharon or to each other. For the present they would defend Emmanuel against the hot-headed aspersions of the other.

"You said yourself, not a month ago," expostulated Harvey D., "that he was a smart little Jew."

Sharon considered briefly.

"Well," he replied, "I don't know as I'd change that—at least not much. I'd still say the same thing, or words to that effect."

"Just how would you put it now?" demanded Gideon, suavely.

Sharon brightened. He had hoped to be asked that.

"The way I'd put it now—having read a lot more of his new-dawning—I'd say he was a little Jew smarty."

The other Whipples had winced at this. The *New Dawn* was assuredly not the simple light-bringer to America's spiritual darkness that they had supposed it would be; but they were not yet prepared to believe the worst.

"If only they wouldn't be so extreme!" murmured the troubled Harvey D. "If only they wouldn't say the country has been tricked into war by capital."

"That's a short horse and soon curried," said Sharon. "They can't say it if you quit paying for it."

"There you are!" said Harvey D. "Merle would say that that's an example of capitalism suppressing the truth. Of course I don't know—maybe it is."

"Sure! Anyway, it would be an example of capital suppressing something. Depends on what you call the truth. If you think the truth is that Germany ought to rule the earth you got it right. That's what all these pacifists and anti-militaries are arguing, though they don't let on to that. Me, I don't think Germany ought to rule the earth. I think she ought to be soundly trounced, and my guess is she's goin' to be. Something tells me this *New Dawn* ain't goin' to save her from her come-uppance. I tell you both plain out, I ain't goin' to have a magazine under my roof that'll talk such stuff about George Washington, the Father of his Country. It's too scandalous."

Thus the *New Dawn* lost a subscriber, though not losing, it should be said, a reader. For Sharon Whipple, having irately stopped his subscription by a letter in which the editor was told he should be ashamed of himself for calling George Washington a crook that way, thereafter bought the magazine hurriedly at the Cut-Rate Pharmacy and read every word of it in secret places not under his roof.

Wilbur Cowan, though proud of the *New Dawn* because his brother's name adorned it, had nevertheless failed to profit by its teachings. He was prepared to admit that America groped in spiritual darkness which the *New Dawn* would flush with its pure white light; he could not have contended with any authority that it was not a land of dollar hunters, basely materialistic, without ideals, artistically impoverished, and devoid of national self-consciousness, whatever that meant. These things were choice words to him, nothing more; and he had no valid authority on which to deny that the country was being tricked into war by the Interests, something heinous that the *New Dawn* spelled with a capital letter. In a way he believed this, because his brother said so. His brother had been educated. He even felt shame-faced and apologetic about his resolve to enter the fight.

But this resolve was stanch; he wanted to fight, even if he had been tricked by Wall Street into feeling that way. The *New Dawn* said he had been tricked, and he supposed it was true, even if he couldn't clearly detect how Wall Street had made Germany pursue the course that made him want to fight. So far as his direct mental processes could inform him, the only trickery involved had been employed by Germany and Spike Brennon. Germany's behaviour was more understandable than the *New Dawn*, and Spike Brennon was much simpler in his words. Spike said it was a dandy chance to get into a real scrap, and all husky lads should be there in a split second at the first call. Perhaps Wall Street had tricked Spike into tricking Wilbur Cowan. Anyway, Spike was determined.

Their decision was made one day after a brisk six rounds of mimic battle. They soaped and bathed and dried their bodies. Then they rested—sitting upon up-ended beer kegs in the storeroom of Pegleg McCarron—and talked a little of life. Spike for a week had been laconic, even for him, and had taken little trouble to pull his punches. To-day he revealed that the Interests had triumphed over his simple mind. He was going and going quick. He recovered a

morsel of gum from beneath the room's one chair, put it again into commission, and spoke decisively.

"I'm goin' quick," he said.

"When do we leave?" demanded Wilbur.

"I'm leavin' in two days."

"We're leaving in two days."

They chewed gum for an interval.

"Way it is," said Spike at length, "I'm nothing but about a fourth-rater in my game. I wasn't never a first-rater. I used to kid myself I was, but handier guys took it out of me. Never was better than a third-rater, I guess. But maybe in this other game I could git to be a first-rater. You can't tell. I still got the use of myself, ain't I? And I wouldn't be so much afraid as a guy who never fought no fights at all. It looks good to me. Of course I don't know much about this here talk you read—makin' the world safe for Democrats, and so forth, but they's certain parts of it had ought to be made unsafe for Germans. I got that much straight."

"Where do we go from here?" demanded Wilbur Cowan.

"N'York," said Spike. "Enlist there. I got a friend in Tamm'ny will see we git treated right."

"Treated right—how?"

"Sent over quick—not kept here. This guy is high up; he can get us sent."

"Good!"

"Only thing worries me," said Spike—"sleepin' out of doors. It ain't healthy. They tell me you sleep any old place—on the ground or in a chicken coop—makes no matter. I never did sleep out of doors, and I hate to begin now; but I s'pose I got to. Mebbe, time we git there, they'll have decent beds. I admit I'm afraid of sleepin' out on the ground. It ain't no way to keep your health."

He ruminated busily with the gum.

"Another thing, kid, you got to remember. In the box-fightin' game sometimes even second money is good. I pulled down a few nice purses in my time. But this here

gun-fightin' stuff, it's winner take all every time. In a gun fight second money is mud. Remember that. And we ain't got the education to be officers. We got to do plain fightin'."

"Plain fighting!" echoed Wilbur. "And I'll tell you another thing. From what I hear they might put me to driving a car, but you bet I ain't going to take that long trip and get seasick, probably, just to fool round with automobiles. I'm going to be out where you are—plain fighting. So remember this—I don't know a thing about cars or motors. Never saw one till I come into the Army."

"You're on!" said Spike. "Now let's eat while we can. They tell me over in the war your meals is often late."

They ate at T-bone Tommy's, consuming a vast quantity of red meat with but a minor accompaniment of vegetables. They were already soldiers. They fought during the meal several sharp engagements, from which they emerged without a scratch.

"We'll be takin' a lot of long chances, kid," cautioned Spike. "First thing we know—they might be saying it to us with flowers."

"Let 'em talk!" said the buoyant Wilbur. "Of course we'll get into trouble sooner or later."

"Sure!" agreed Spike. "Way I look at it, I got about one good fight left in me. All I hope is, it'll be a humdinger."

Later they wandered along River Street, surveying the little town with new eyes. They were far off—"over where the war was taking place," as Spike neatly put it—surveying at that long range the well-remembered scene; revisiting it from some remote spot where perhaps it had been said to them with flowers.

"We'd ought to tell Herman Vielhaber," said Spike. "Herman's a Heinie, but he's a good scout at that."

"Sure!" agreed Wilbur.

They found Herman alone at one of his tables staring morosely at an untouched glass of beer. The Vielhaber establishment was already suffering under the stigma of pro-Germanism put upon it by certain of the watchful towns-

people. Judge Penniman, that hale old invalid, had even declared that Herman was a spy, and signalled each night to other spies by flapping a curtain of his lighted room above the saloon. The judge had found believers, though it was difficult to explain just what information Herman would be signalling and why he didn't go out and tell it to his evil confederates by word of mouth. Herman often found trade dull of an evening now, since many of his old clients would patronize his rival, Pegleg McCarron; for Pegleg was a fervent patriot who declared that all Germans ought to be in hell. Herman greeted the newcomers with troubled cordiality.

"Sed down, you boys. What you have? Sasspriller? All right! Mamma, two sasspriller for these young men."

Minna Vielhaber brought the drink from the bar. Minna had red eyes, and performed her service in silence, after which she went moodily back to her post.

They drank to Herman's health and to Minna's, and told of their decision.

"Right!" said Herman. "I give you right." He stared long at his beer. "I tell you, boys," he said at last, "mamma and me we got in a hard place, yes. Me? I'm good American—true blue. I got my last papers twenty-two years ago. I been good American since before that. Mamma, too. Both good. Then war comes, and I remember the Fatherland—we don't never furgit that, mind you, even so we are good Americans. But I guess mebbe I talk a lot of foolishness about Germany whipping everybody she fight with. I guess I was too proud of that country that used to be mine. You know how it is, you boys; you remember your home and your people kind of nice, mebbe."

"Sure!" said Spike. "Me? I was raised down back of the tracks in Buffalo—one swell place fur a kid to grow up—but honest, sometimes I git waked up in the night, and find m'self homesick fur that rotten dump. Sure, I know how you feel, Herman."

Herman, cheered by this sympathy, drank of his beer.

Putting down the glass, he listened intently. Minna, at the bar, was heard to be weeping.

"Mamma," he called, gruffly, "you keep still once. None of that!"

Minna audibly achieved the commanded silence. Herman listened until satisfied of this, then resumed:

"Well, so fur, so good. Then Germany don't act right, so my own country got to fight her. She's got to fight her! I'd get me another country if she didn't. But now people don't understand how I feel so. They say: 'Yes, he praise Germany to the sky; now I guess he talk the other side of his mouth purty good.' They don't understand me. I want Germany should be punished good, and my country she's goin' to do it good. That is big in my heart. But shall I go out on the street and holler, 'To hell with Germany?' Not! Because people would know I lied, and I would know. I want Germany should be well whipped till all them sheep's heads is out of high places, but I can't hate Germans. I could punish someone good and not hate 'em. I'm a German in my blood, but you bet I ain't a pro-German.

"Mamma, again I tell you keep still once—and now you boys goin' to fight. That's good! Me, I would go if I was not too old; not a better German fighter would they have than me. I kill 'em all what come till I fall over myself. You boys remember and fight hard, so we make the world nice again. I bet you fight good—strong, husky boys like you. And I hope you come back strong and hearty and live a long time in a world you helped to put it right. I hope some day you have children will be proud because you was good Americans, like mine would be if we had a little one. I hope you teach 'em to fight quick for their own good country. Now—*prosit!*"

They drank, and in the stillness Minna Vielhaber was again heard to be lamenting. Herman addressed her harshly:

"Mamma, now again I beg you shall keep still once."

Minna appeared from back of the bar and became coherent.

"I wassn't cryin' no tears for Germans—wass cryin' fur

them!" She waved a damp towel at Herman's guests. Herman soothed her.

"Now, now—them boys take care of themselves. Likely they have a little trouble here and there or some place, but they come back sound—I tell you that. Now you dry up—you make some other people feel that way. Hear me?" Minna subsided.

"You bet," resumed Herman, "we're Americans good. Mebbe I can't tell people so now, like they believe me; it's hard to believe I want Germans whipped good if I don't hate 'em, but it's true—and lots others besides me. They come in my place, Dagoes, Wops, Hunnyacks, Swedes, Jews, every breed, and what you think—they keep talkin' about what us Americans had ought to do to lick Germany. It's funny, yes? To hear 'em say us Americans, but when you know them foreigners mean it so hard—well, it ain't funny! It's good!

"And me? Say, I tell you something. If any one say I ain't good American I tell you this: I stand by America like I was born here. I stand by her if she fight Germany just as if she fight France. I stand by her in war, and I do more than that. You listen! Now comes it they say the country's goin' to be dry and put me out of business. What you think of that, hey? So they will shut booze joints like that feller McCarron runs, and even a nice place like this. So you can't buy a glass beer or a schoppen Rhine wine. What you think? Mebbe it's all talk, mebbe not. But listen! This is my country, no matter what she does; I stand by her if she fights Germany to death; and by God, I stand by her if she goes dry! Could I say more? *Prosit!*"

CHAPTER XVI

THE next day Wilbur Cowan sought Sharon Whipple with the news that he meant to do a bit of plain fighting overseas. He found the old man in the stable, in troubled controversy with a rebellious car. He sat stonily at the wheel and at intervals pressed a determined heel upon a self-starter that would whir but an impotent protest. He glared up at Wilbur as the latter came to rest beside the car.

"Well, what now?" He spoke impatiently.

"I'm going to enlist; I thought I would tell you."

Sharon pointed the heavy brows at him with a thumb and uttered a disparaging "Humph!" Then he appeared to forget the announcement, and pressed again on the self-starter, listening above its shrill song for the deeper rumble of the engine. This did not ensue, and he shifted his heel, turning a plaintive eye upon the young man.

"She don't seem to excite," he said. "I've tried and tried, and I can't excite her."

It was an old, old story to Wilbur Cowan.

"Press her again," he directed. Sharon pressed and the other raptly listened. "Ignition," he said.

He lifted the hood on one side and with a pair of pliers manipulated what Sharon was never to know as anything but her gizzard, though the surgeon, as he delicately wrought, murmured something about platinum points.

"Try her!" Sharon tried her.

"Now she excites!" he exploded, gleefully, as the hum of the motor took up the shrill whir of the self-starter. He stopped the thing and bent a reproachful gaze upon Wilbur.

"Every one else leaving me—even that Elihu Titus. I

never thought you would, after the way we've stood together in this town. I had a right to expect something better from you. I'd like to know how I'm goin' to get along without you. You show a lot of gratitude, I must say."

"Well, I thought——"

"Oh, I knew you'd go—I expected that!"

"Yes, sir," said Wilbur.

"You wouldn't been any good if you hadn't. Even that Elihu Titus went."

"Yes, sir," said Wilbur. He had been waiting to ask Sharon's opinion about the only troubling element in his decision. This seemed the moment. "You don't suppose—you don't think perhaps the war will be stopped or anything, just as I get over there?"

Sharon laboured with a choice bit of sarcasm.

"No, I guess it'll take more'n you to stop it, even with that Elihu Titus going along. Of course, some spy may get the news to 'em that you've started, and they may say, 'Why keep up the struggle if this Cowan boy's goin' in against us?' But my guess is they'll brazen it out for a month or so longer. Of course they'll be scared stiff."

Wilbur grinned at him, then spoke gravely.

"You know what I mean—Merle. He says the plain people will never allow this war to go on, because they've been tricked into it by Wall Street or something. I read it in his magazine. They're working against the war night and day, he says. Well, all I mean, I'd hate to go over there and be seasick and everything and then find they had stopped it."

Intently, grimly, Sharon climbed from his car. His short, fat leg went back and he accurately kicked an empty sprinkling can across the floor. It was a satisfying object to kick; it made a good noise and came to a clattering rest on its dented side. It was so satisfying that with another kick he sent the can bounding through an open door.

"Gave it the second barrel, didn't you?" said Wilbur. Sharon grinned now.

"Just a letter to your brother," he explained. Then he became profanely impassioned. "Fudge! Fudge and double fudge! Scissors and white aprons! Prunes and apricots! No! That war won't be stopped by any magazine! Go on—fight your fool head off! Don't let any magazine keep you back!"

"Yes, sir," said Wilbur.

"They can't stop the war, because there are too many boys like you all over this land. Trick or no trick, that's what they're up against. You'll all fight—while they're writing their magazines. Your reactions are different. That's a word I got from the dirty thing—and from that brother of yours. He gets a lot of use out of that word—always talking about his reactions. Just yesterday I said to him: 'Take care of your actions and your reactions will take care of themselves.' He don't cotton to me. I guess I never buttered him up with praise any too much. His languageousness gets on me. He's got Gideon and Harvey D. on a hot griddle, too, though they ain't lettin' on. Here the Whipples have always gone to war for their country—Revolutionary War and 1812, Mexican War, Civil War, Spanish-American—Harvey D. was in that. Didn't do much fighting, but he was belligerent enough. And now this son of his sets back and talks about his reactions! What I say—he's a Whipple in name only."

"He's educated," protested Wilbur, quick to defend this brother, even should he cheat him out of the good plain fighting he meant to do.

"Educated!" Sharon imitated a porpoise without knowing it. "Educated out of books! All any of that rabble rout of his knows is what they read secondhand. They don't know people. Don't know capitalists. Don't even know these wage slaves they write about. That's why they can't stop the war. They may be educated, but you're enlightened. They know more books, but you know more life in a minute than they'll ever know—you got a better idea of the what-for in this world. Let 'em write! You fight!

If it rests on that hairy bunch to stop the war you'll get a bellyful of fighting. They're just a noisy fringe of buzzers round the real folks of this country."

"Yes, sir," said Wilbur. "I thought I'd ask."

"Well, now you know. Shove off!"

"Yes, sir." Sharon's tone changed to petulance.

"That's right, and leave me here to farm twenty-five hundred acres all by myself, just when I was going to put in tractors. That's the kind you are—just a fool country-town boy, with a head full of grand notions. Well, somebody's got to raise food for the world. She's goin' short pretty soon or I miss my guess. Somebody's got to raise bread and meat. All right, leave me here to do the dirty work while you flourish round over there seein' the world and havin' a good time. I'm sick of the sight of you and your airs. Get out!"

"Yes, sir."

"When you leaving?"

"To-morrow night—six-fifty-eight."

"Sooner the better!"

"Yes, sir."

Sharon turned back to the car, grumbling incoherent phrases. He affected to busy himself with the mechanism that had just been readjusted, looking at it wisely, thumbing a valve, though with a care to leave things precisely as they were.

That afternoon as Sharon made an absorbed progress along River Street he jostled Winona Penniman, who with even a surpassing absorption had been staring into the window of one of those smart shops marking Newbern's later growth. Whereas boots and shoes had been purchased from an establishment advertising simple Boots and Shoes, they were now sought by people of the right sort from this new shop which was labelled the Élite Bootery.

Winona had halted with assumed carelessness before its attractively dressed window displaying a colourful array

of satin dancing slippers with high heels and bejewelled toes. Winona's assumption of carelessness had been meant to deceive passers-by into believing that she looked upon these gauds with a censorious eye, and not as one meaning flagrantly to purchase of them. Her actual dire intention was nothing to flaunt in the public gaze. Nor did she mean to voice her wishes before a shopful of people who might consider them ambiguous.

Four times she had passed the door of the shop, waiting for a dull moment in its traffic. Now but two women were left, and they seemed to be waiting only for change. Her resolution did not falter; she was merely practising a trained discretion. She was going to buy a pair of satin dancing slippers though the whole world should look upon her as lost. Too long, she felt, had she dwelt among the untrodden ways. As she had confided to her journal, the placid serenity of her life had become a sea of mad unrest. Old moorings had been wrenched loose; she floated with strange tides. And Wilbur Cowan, who was going to war, had invited her to be present that evening at the opening of Newbern's new and gorgeous restaurant, where the diners, between courses and until late after dinner, would dance to the strains of exotic and jerky music, precisely as they did in the awful city.

Winona had not even debated a refusal. The boy should be gratified. Nor did she try to convince herself that her motive was wholly altruistic. She had suddenly wished to mingle in what she was persuaded would be a scene of mad revelry. She had definitely abandoned the untrodden ways. She thought that reading about war might have unsettled her ideals. Anyway, they were unsettled. She was going to this place of the gay night life—and she was going right!

It was while she still waited, perturbed but outwardly cool, that the absorbed Sharon Whipple brushed her shoulder. She wondered if her secret purpose had been divined. But Sharon apparently was engrossed by other matters than the descent into frivolity of one who had long been austere.

"Well," he said, beaming on her, "our boy is going over." Winona was relieved.

"Yes, he's off, but he'll come back safe."

"Oh, I know that! Nothing could hurt him, but I'll miss the skeesicks." He ruminated, then said pridefully: "That boy is what my son would have been if I'd had one. You can't tell me any son of my get and raising would have talked about his reactions when this time come!"

Winona winced ever so slightly at this way of putting it, but smiled valiantly.

"Publishing magazines full of slander about George Washington, and this new kind of stubby-ended poetry!"

"It is very different from Tennyson," said Winona.

"The other one's a man," went on Sharon. "You remember when you was worried because he wouldn't settle down to anything? Well, you watch him from now on! He hasn't got the book knowledge, but he's got a fine outdoors education, and that's the kind we need most. Don't you see that fine look in his eye—afraid of nothing, knowing how to do most anything? His is the kind makes us a great country—outdoor boys from the little towns and farms. They're the real folks. I'm awful proud of him, though I ain't wanting that to get out on me. I been watching him since he was in short pants. He's dependable—knows how. Say, I'm glad he took to the outdoors and didn't want to dress up every day and be a clerk in a store or a bank or some place like that. Wasn't it good?"

"Wasn't it?" said Winona, bravely.

"We need this kind in war, and we'll need it even more when the war is over—when he comes back."

"When he comes back," echoed Winona. And then with an irrelevance she could not control: "I'm going to a dance with him to-night." Her own eyes were dancing strangely as she declared it.

"Good thing!" said Sharon. He looked her over shrewdly. "Seems to me you're looking younger than you ought to," he said.

Winona pouted consciously for the first time in her hitherto honest life.

"You're looking almighty girlish," added Sharon with almost a leer, and Winona suffered a fearful apprehension that her ribs were menaced by his alert thumb. She positively could not be nudged in public. She must draw the line somewhere, even if she had led him on by pouting. She stepped quickly to the door of the Élite Bootery.

"He'll come back all right," said Sharon. "Say, did I ever tell you how he got me to shootin' a good round of golf? I tried it first with the wooden bludgeons, and couldn't ever make the little round lawns under seven or eight—parties snickering their fool heads off at me. So I says I can never make the bludgeons hit right. I don't seem to do more'n harass the ball into 'em, so he says try an iron all the way. So I tried the iron utensils, and now I get on the lawn every time in good shape, I can tell you. Parties soon begun to snicker sour all at once, I want you to know. It ain't anything for me to make that course in ninety-eight or"—Sharon's conscience called aloud— "or a hundred and ten or fifteen or thereabouts, in round numbers."

"I'm so glad," said Winona.

"I give him all the credit. And"—he turned after starting on—"he'll come back—he'll come back to us!"

Winona drew a fortifying breath and plunged into the Élite Bootery. She was perhaps more tight-lipped than usual, but to the not-too-acute observer this would have betokened mere businesslike determination instead of the panic it was. She walked grimly to a long bench, seated herself, and placed her right foot firmly upon a pedestal, full in the gaze of a clerk who was far too young, she instantly perceived, for negotiations of this delicacy.

"I wish to purchase," she began through slightly relaxed lips, "a pair of satin dancing slippers like those in your window—high-heeled, one strap, and possibly with those jewelled buckles." She here paused for another breath,

then continued tremendously: "Something in a shade to go with—with these!"

With dainty brazenness the small hand at her knee obeyed an amazing command from her disordered brain and raised the neat brown skirt of Winona a full two inches, to reveal a slim ankle between which and an ogling world there gleamed but the thinnest veneer of tan silk.

Winona waited breathless. She had tortured herself with the possible consequences of this adventure. She had even conceived a clerk of forbidding aspect who would now austerely reply: "Woman, how dare you come in here and talk that way? You who have never worn anything but black cotton stockings, or lisle at the worst, and whose most daring footwear has been a neat Oxford tie with low heels, such as respectable women wear? Full well you know that a love for the sort of finery you now describe—and reveal—is why girls go wrong. And yet you come shamelessly in here—no, it is too much! You forget yourself! Leave the place at once!"

Sometimes this improvisation had concluded with a homily in kinder words, in which she would be entreated to go forth and try to be a better woman. And sometimes, but not often, she had decided that a shoe clerk, no matter his age, would take her request as a mere incident in the day's trade. Other women wore such things, and perforce must buy them in a public manner. She had steeled her nerve to the ordeal, and now she flushed with a fine new confidence, for the clerk merely said, "Certainly, madam"—in the later shops of Newbern they briefly called you madam—and with a kind of weary, professional politeness fell to the work of equipping her. A joyous relief succeeded her panic. She not only declared a moment later that her instep was far too high, but fitted at last in a slipper of suitable shade she raised her skirt again as she posed before a mirror that reached the floor. Winona was coming on. Had come!

Late that afternoon, while a last bit of chiffon was being tacked to a dancing frock which her mother had been told

to make as fancy as she pleased, Winona hastily scribbled in her journal: "Am I of a gay disposition? Too gay, too volatile? No matter! It is an agreeable defect where one retains discretion sufficient for its regulation. This very night I am one of a party avowedly formed for pleasure, something my reflective mind would once have viewed with disapprobation. But again no matter. Perhaps I have been too analytical, too introspective. Perhaps the war has confused my sense of spiritual values. War is such a mistake!"

It was a flushed and sparkling Winona who later fluttered down the dull old stairs of the respectable Penniman home at the call of the waiting Wilbur Cowan. Her dark hair was still plainly, though rather effectively, drawn about her small head—she had definitely rebuffed the suggestion of her mother that it be marcelled—but her wisp of a frock of bronze gossamer was revolutionary in the extreme. Mrs. Penniman had at last been fancy in her dressmaking for her child, and now stood by to exclaim at her handiwork. Winona, with surprising *aplomb*, bore the scrutiny of the family while she pulled long white gloves along her bare arms. A feathered fan dangled from one of them.

"Now, I guess you believe me," said Mrs. Penniman. "Haven't I always said what a few little touches would do for you?" Proudly she adjusted a filmy flounce to a better line. "And such lovely, lovely slippers!"

The slippers were indeed to be observed by one and all. The short dancing frock was in that year.

Wilbur Cowan was appreciative.

"Some kid!" he cried; "an eyeful!"

Winona pouted for the second time that day, instead of rebuking him for these low phrases of the street. Only Judge Penniman caviled.

"Well, I'd like to know what we're coming to," he grumbled. "The idee of a mere chit like her goin' out to a place that's no better than a saloon, even if you do guzzle your drinks at a table—and in a dug-out dress!"

Winona, instead of feeling rebuked, was gratified to be called a mere chit. She pouted at the invalid.

"Poor father!" she loftily murmured, and stood while her mother threw the evening cloak about her acceptable shoulders.

It was true that at the La Bohême alcoholic stimulant would be served to those who desired it, but this was not compulsory, and the place was in no sense a common saloon. Her father was old-fashioned, as he had shown himself to be about the lawless new dance steps that Wilbur had been teaching her. He had declared that if people performed such antics in public without music they'd mighty soon find themselves in the lockup, and Winona had not even shuddered. Now, as he continued to grumble at this degeneracy, she gracefully tapped his arm with her fan. She had read of this device being effectively employed by certain conquerors of men, and coolly she tried it upon her father. She performed the trifle gracefully, and it seemed of value audacious and yet nothing to be misunderstood by a really clean-minded man. She tapped the judge again as they left, with a minor variation of the technic. The judge little knew that he but served as a dummy at target practice.

The car in which Wilbur conveyed his guest to the scene of revelry was not of an elegance commensurate with Winona's. It was a mongrel of many makes, small, battered, and of a complaining habit. He had acquired it as a gift from one who considered that he bestowed trash, and had transformed it into a thing of noisy life, knowing, as a mother knows of her infant, what each of its squeaks and rattles implied. It was distressing, in truth, to look upon, but it went. Indeed, the proud owner had won a race with it from a too-outspoken critic who drove a much superior car. It was Wilbur Cowan who first in Newbern discovered that you could speed up a car by dropping a few moth balls into the gasoline tank. He called his car the Can, but, unreasonably, was not too cordial to others using the name.

The Can bore the pair to a fretful halt under the newest

electric lights on River Street. "The La Bohême" read the dazzling sign. And Winona passed into her new life. She was feeling strangely young as she relinquished her cloak to a uniformed maid. She stood amid exotic splendour, and was no longer herself but some regal creature in the Sunday supplement of a great city paper. She had always wanted to be a girl, but had not known how—and now at thirty-five how easy it seemed! She preceded Wilbur to a table for two, impressive with crystal and damask, and was seated by an obsequious foreigner who brought to the act a manner that had never before in Newbern distinguished this service—when it had been performed at all.

Other tables about them were already filled with Newbern's elect, thrilled as was Winona, concealing it as ably as she, with the town's new distinction. Hardly had food been ordered when a hidden orchestra blared and the oblong polished space of which their own table formed part of the border was thronged with dancing couples. Winona glowingly surrendered to the evil spell. Wilbur merely looked an invitation and she was dancing as one who had always danced. She tapped him with her fan as he led her back to the table where their first course had arrived. She trifled daintily with strange food, composing a sentence for her journal: "The whole scene was of a gayety hitherto unparalleled in the annals of our little town."

There was more food, interspersed with more dancing. Later Winona, after many sidewise perkings of her brown head, discovered Merle and Patricia Whipple at a neighbouring table. She nodded and smiled effusively to them. Patricia returned her greeting gayly; Merle removed a shining cigarette holder of remarkable length and bowed, but did not smile. He seemed to be aloof and gloomy.

"He's got a lot on his mind," said Wilbur, studying his brother respectfully.

Merle's plenteous hair, like his cigarette holder, was longer than is commonly worn by his sex, and marked by a certain not infelicitous disorder. He had trouble with a luxuriant

lock of it that persistently fell across his pale brow. With a weary, world-worn gesture he absently brushed this back into place from moment to moment. His thick eyeglasses were suspended by a narrow ribbon of black satin. His collar was low and his loosely tied cravat was flowing of line.

"Out of condition," said Wilbur, expertly. "Looks pasty."

"But very, very distinguished," supplemented Winona.

Patricia Whipple now came to their table with something like a dance step, though the music was stilled. She had been away from Newbern for two years.

"Europe and Washington," she hurriedly explained as Wilbur held a chair for her, "and glad to get back—but I'm off again. Nurse! Begin the course next week in New York —learning how to soothe the bed of pain. I know I'm a rattlepate, but that's what I'm going to do. All of us mad about the war."

Wilbur studied her as he had studied Merle. She was in better condition, he thought. She came only to his shoulder as he stood to seat her, but she was no longer bony. Her bones were neatly submerged. Her hair was still rusty, the stain being deeper than he remembered, and the freckles were but piquant memories. Here and there one shone faintly, like the few faint stars showing widely apart through cloud crevices on a murky night. Her nose, though no longer precisely trivial, would never be the Whipple nose. Its lines were now irrevocably set in a design far less noble. Her gown was shining, of an elusive shade that made Wilbur think of ripe fruits—chiefly apricots, he decided. She was unquestionably what she had confessed herself to be—a rattlepate. She rattled now, with a little waiting, half-tremulous smile to mark her pauses, as if she knew people would weigh and find her wanting, but hoped for judgments tempered with mercy.

"Mad about the war? I should think so! Grandpa Gideon mad, and Harvey D.—that dear thing's going to do something at Washington for a dollar a year. You'd think it was the only honest money he'd ever earned if you heard

Merle talk about bankers sucking the life blood of the people. Juliana taking charge of something and Mother Ella mad about knitting—always tangled in yarn. She'll be found strangled in her own work some day. And Uncle Sharon mad about the war, and fifty times madder about Merle.

"D'you see Merle's picture in that New York paper yesterday?—all hair and eyeglasses, and leaning one temple on the two first fingers of the right hand—and guess what it said—"Young millionaire socialist who denounces country's entrance into war!' Watch him—he's trying to look like the picture now! Uncle Sharon read the 'millionaire socialist,' and barked like a mad dog. He says: 'Yes, he'd be a millionaire socialist if he was going to be any kind, and if he was going to be a burglar he'd have to be one of these dress-suit burglars you always read about.'

"Of course he's awfully severe on Merle for not going to fight, but how could he with his bad eyes? He couldn't see to shoot at people, poor thing; and besides, he's too clever to be wasted like a common soldier. He starts people to thinking—worth-while people. He says so himself. Mixed up with all sorts of clever things with the most wonderful names—garment workers and poet radicals and vorticists and new-arters and everything like that, who are working to lift us up so nobody will own anything and everybody can have what he wants. Of course I don't understand everything they say, but it sounds good, so sympathetic, don't you think?"

She had paused often with the little smile that implored pity for her rattlepatedness. Now it prolonged itself as the orchestra became wildly alive.

Winona had but half listened to Patricia's chatter. She had been staring instead at the girl's hair—staring and wondering lawlessly. She had seen advertisements. Might her own hair be like that—"like tarnished gold," she put it? Of course you had to keep putting the stuff on at the roots as it grew out. But would her colour blend with that shade?

Patricia's skin had the warm fairness of new milk, but Winona was dusky. Perhaps a deeper tint of auburn——

She was recalled from this perilous musing by Rapp, Senior, who came pressing his handkerchief to a brow damp from the last dance. He bowed to Winona.

"May I have this pleasure?" he said. Winona rose like a woman of the world.

"We're on the map at last," said Rapp, Senior, referring to Newbern's newest big-town feature.

"I know I'm on the map at last," said Winona, coyly, and tapped the arm of Rapp, Senior, with her feathered trifle of a fan.

"Dance?" said Wilbur to Patricia.

"Thanks a heap! Merle won't. He says how can he dance when thinking of free Russia? But did you see those stunning Russian dancers? It doesn't keep them from dancing, does it? Poor old Merle is balmy—mice in his wainscoting."

They danced, and Patricia was still the rattlepate.

"You're going over, Uncle Sharon told us. Merle says you're a victim of mob reaction—what does that mean? No matter. Pretty soon he said you'd be only a private. Grandpa Gideon looked as if he had bitten into a lemon. He says, 'I believe privates form a very important arm of the service'—just like that. He's not so keen on Merle, but he won't admit it. With him it's once a Whipple always a Whipple! When he saw Merle's picture, leaning the beautiful head on the two long fingers and the hair kind of scrambly, he just said, 'Ah, you young scamp of a socialist!' as if he were saying, 'Oh, fie on you!' Merle can talk the whole bunch down when he gets to shooting on all six—sounds good, but I've no doubt it's just wise twaddle.

"What a stunning dancer you are! Ask me quick again so I won't have to go back to free Russia. I'll promise to nurse you when you get wounded over there. I'll have learned to do everything by that time. Wouldn't it be funny if you were brought in some day with a lot of wounds

and I'd say, 'Why, dear me, that's someone I know! You must let me nurse him back to health,' and of course they would. Anyway, the family's keen about my going. They think I ought to do my bit, especially as Merle can't, because of his eyes. Be sure you ask me again."

He asked her again and yet again. He liked dancing with her. Sometimes when she talked her eyes were like green flames. But she talked of nothing long and the flames would die and her little waiting smile come entreating consideration for her infirmities.

"Now you be sure to come straight to me directly you're wounded," she again cautioned him as they parted.

He shook hands warmly with her. He liked the girl, but he hoped there would be other nurses at hand if this thing occurred; that is, if it proved to be anything serious.

"Anyway, I hope I'll see you," he said. "I guess home faces will be scarce over there."

She looked him over approvingly.

"Be a good soldier," she said.

Again they shook hands. Then she fluttered off under the gloomy charge of Merle, who had remained austerely aloof from the night's gayety. Wilbur had had but a few words with him, for Patricia claimed his time.

"You seem a lot older than I do now," he said, and Merle, brushing back the errant lock, had replied: "Poor chap, you're a victim of the mob reaction. Of course I'm older now. I'm face to face with age-long problems that you've never divined the existence of. It does age one."

"I suppose so," agreed Wilbur.

He felt shamed, apologetic for his course. Still he would have some plain fighting, Wall Street or no Wall Street.

He wrested a chattering Winona from Mrs. Henrietta Plunkett at the door of the ladies' cloakroom. Mrs. Plunkett was Newbern's ablest exponent of the cause of woman, and she had been disquieted this night at observing signs of an unaccustomed frivolity in one of her hitherto stanchest disciples.

"I can't think what has come over you!" she had complained to Winona. "You seem like a different girl!"

"I am a different girl!" boasted Winona.

"You do look different—your gown is wonderfully becoming, and what lovely slippers!" Mrs. Plunkett inspected the aged débutante with kindly eyes. "But remember, my dear, we mustn't let frivolities like this divert our attention from the cause. A bit more of the good fight and we shall have come into our own."

"All this wonderful mad evening I have forgotten the cause," confessed Winona.

"Mercy!" said Mrs. Plunkett. "Forgotten the cause? One hardly does that, does one, without a reason?"

"I have reasons enough," said Winona, thinking of the new dancing slippers and the frock.

"Surely, my dear, you who are so free and independent are not thinking of marriage?"

Winona had not been thinking of marriage. But now she did.

"Well"—she began—"of course, I——"

"Mercy! Not really! Why, Winona Penniman, would you barter your independence for a union that must be demeaning, at least politically, until our cause is won?"

"Well, of course——" Winona again faltered, tapping one minute toe of a dancing slipper on the floor.

"Do you actually wish," continued Henrietta Plunkett, rising to the foothills of her platform manner, "to become a parasite, a man's bond slave, his creature? Do you wish to be his toy, his plaything?"

"I do!" said Winona low and fervently, as if she had spoken the words under far more solemn auspices.

"Mercy me! Winona Penniman!"

And Wilbur Cowan had then come to bear her off to her room, that echoed with strange broken music and light voices and the rhythmic scuffing of feet on a floor—and to the privacy of her journal.

"I seem," she wrote, "to have flung wisdom and prudence

to the winds. Though well I know the fading nature of all sublunary enjoyments, yet when I retire shortly it will be but to protract the fierce pleasure of this night by recollection. Full well I know that Morpheus will wave his ebon wand in vain."

Morpheus did just that. Long after Winona had protracted the fierce enjoyment of the night to a vanishing point she lay wakeful, revolving her now fixed determination to take the nursing course that Patricia Whipple would take, and go far overseas, where she could do a woman's work; or, as she phrased it again and again, be a girl of some use in a vexed world.

In the morning she learned for the first time that Wilbur was to go to war in company with a common prize fighter. It chilled her for the moment, but she sought to make the best of it.

"I hope," she told Wilbur, "that war will make a better man of your friend."

"What do you mean—a better man?" he quickly wanted to know. "Let me tell you, Spike's a pretty good man right now for his weight. You ought to see him in action once! Don't let any one fool you about that boy! What do you expect at a hundred and thirty-three—a heavyweight?"

After he had gone, late that afternoon, after she had said a solemn farewell to him in the little room of the little house in the side yard, Winona became reckless. She picked up and scanned with shrewd eyes the photograph of Spike that had been left: "To my friend Kid Cowan from his friend Eddie—Spike—Brennon, 133 lbs. ringside."

She studied without wincing the crouched figure of hostile eye, even though the costume was not such as she would have selected for a young man.

"After all, he's only a boy," she murmured. She studied again the intent face. "And he looks as if he had an abundance of pepper."

She hoped she would be there to nurse them both if anything happened. She had told Wilbur this, but he had not

been encouraging. He seemed to believe that nothing would happen to either of them.

"Of course we'll be shot at," he admitted, "but like as not they'll miss us."

Winona sighed and replaced the photograph. Now they would be a couple of heads clustered with other heads at a car window; smiling, small-town boys going lightly out to their ordeal. She must hurry and be over!

Wilbur, with his wicker suitcase, paused last to say goodbye to Frank, the dog. Frank was now a very old dog, having reached a stage of yapping senility, where he found his sole comfort in following the sun about the house and dozing in it, sometimes noisily dreaming of past adventures. These had been exclusively of a sentimental character, for Frank had never been the fighting dog his first owner had promised he would be. He was an arch sentimentalist and had followed a career of determined motherhood, bringing into the world litter after litter of puppies, exhibiting all the strains then current in Newbern. He had surveyed each new family with pride—families revealing tinges of setter, Airedale, Newfoundland, pointer, collie—with the hopeful air of saying that a dog never knew what he could do until he tried. Now he could only dream of past conquests, and merely complained when his master roused him.

"I hope you'll be here when I get back—and I hope I'll be here, too," said his master, and went on, sauntering up to the station a bit later as nonchalantly as ever Dave Cowan himself had gone there to begin a long journey on the six-fifty-eight. Spike Brennon lounged against a baggage truck. Spike's only token of departure was a small bundle covered with that day's *Advance*. They waited in silence until the dingy way train rattled in. Then Sharon Whipple appeared from the freight room of the station. He affected to be impatient with the railway company because of a delayed shipment which he took no trouble to specify definitely, and he affected to be surprised at the sight of Wilbur and Spike.

"Hello! I thought you two boys went on the noon train," he lied, carelessly. "Well, long as you're here you might as well take these—in case you get short." He pressed a bill into the hand of each. "Good-bye and good luck! I had to come down about that shipment should have been here last Monday—it beats time what these railroads do with stuff nowadays. Five days between here and Buffalo!"

He continued to grumble as the train moved on, even as the two waved to him from a platform.

"A hundred berries!" breathed Spike, examining his bill. "Say, he sheds it easy, don't he?"

They watched him where he stood facing the train. He seemed to have quit grumbling; his face was still.

"Well, kid, here we go! Now it's up to the guy what examines us. You'll breeze through—not a nick in you. Me—well, they're fussy about teeth, I'm told, and, of course, I had to have a swift poke in the mush that dented my beak. They may try to put the smother on me."

"Cheer up! You'll make the grade," said Wilbur.

Through the night he sat cramped and wakeful in the seat of a crowded day coach, while Spike beside him slept noisily, perhaps owing to the dented beak. His head back, he looked out and up to a bow moon that raced madly with the train, and to far, pale stars that were still. He wondered if any one out there noted the big new adventure down here.

CHAPTER XVII

WILBUR COWAN'S fear that his brother might untimely stop the war proved baseless. The war went on despite the *New Dawn's* monthly exposure of its motive and sinister aims; despite its masterly paraphrase of a celebrated document declaring that this Government had been "conceived in chicanery and dedicated to the industrial slavery of the masses." Not even the new social democracy of Russia sufficed to inspire any noticeable resistance. The common people of the United States had refused to follow the example of their brothers of Russia and destroy a tyranny equally hateful, though the *New Dawn* again and again set forth the advantages to accrue from such action. War prevailed. As the Reverend Mallet said: "It gathered the vine of the earth and cast it into the great wine press of the wrath of God."

But the little cluster of intellectuals on the staff of the *New Dawn* persevered. Monthly it isolated the causative bacteria of unrest, to set the results before those who could profit would they but read. Merle, the modernist, at the forefront of what was known as all the new movements, tirelessly applied the new psychology to the mind of the common man and proved him a creature of mean submissions. He spoke of "our ranks" and "our brave comrades of Russia," but a selective draft had its way and an army went forward.

In Newbern, which Merle frequented between issues of the magazine, he received perhaps less appreciation than was his due. Sharon Whipple was blindly disparaging. Even Gideon was becoming less attentive when the modernist expounded the new freedom. Gideon was still puzzled. He quoted, as to war: "The sign of a mad world. God bless

us out of it!" But he was beginning to wonder if perhaps this newest Whipple had not, with all his education, missed something that other Whipples had learned.

Harvey D. had once or twice spoken with frank impatience of the *New Dawn's* gospel. And one Kate Brophy, cook at the Whipple New Place, said of its apostle that he was "a sahft piece of furniture." Merle was sensitive to these little winds of captiousness. He was now convinced that Newbern would never be a cultural centre. There was a spirit of intolerance abroad.

Sharon Whipple, becoming less and less restrained as the months went on, spoke of the staff of the *New Dawn* in Merle's hearing. He called it a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. Merle smiled tolerantly, and called Sharon a besotted reactionary, warning him further that such as he could never stem the tide of revolution now gathering for its full sweep. Sharon retorted that it hadn't swept anything yet.

"Perhaps not yet—on the surface," said Merle. "But now we shall show our teeth."

Sharon fell to a low sort of wit in his retort.

"Better not show your teeth to the Government!" he warned. "If you do you want to have the address of a good dentist handy."

And after another month—when the magazine of light urged resistance to the draft—it became apparent not only that the *New Dawn* would not stop the war, but that the war would incredibly stop the *New Dawn*. The despoilers of America actually plotted to destroy it, to smother its message, to adjust new shackles about the limbs of labour.

Sharon Whipple was the first of the privileged class to say that something had got to be done by the family—unless they wanted to have the police do it. Gideon was the second. These two despoilers of the people summoned Harvey D. from Washington, and the conspiracy against spiritual and industrial liberty ripened late one night in the library of the Whipple New Place. It was agreed that the last num-

ber of the *New Dawn* went pretty far—farther than any Whipple ought to go. But it was not felt that the time had come for extreme measures. It was believed that the newest Whipple should merely be reasoned with. To this end they began to reason among themselves, and were presently wrangling. It developed that Sharon's idea of reasoning lacked subtlety. It developed that Gideon and Harvey D. reasoned themselves into sheer bewilderment in an effort to find reasons that would commend themselves to Merle; so that this first meeting of the conspirators was about to break up fruitlessly, when Sharon Whipple was inspired to a suggestion that repelled yet pricked the other two until they desperately yielded to it. This was that none other than Dave Cowan be called into consultation.

"He'll know more about his own son than we do," urged Sharon.

Harvey D.'s feeling of true fatherhood was irritated by this way of putting it, but in the end he succumbed. He felt that his son was now far removed from the sphere of Dave Cowan, yet the man might retain some influence over the boy that would be of benefit to all concerned.

"He's in town," said Sharon. "He's a world romper, but he's here now. I heard him to-day in the post office telling someone how many stars there are in the sky—or something like that."

The following afternoon Dave Cowan, busy at the type-setting machine of the Newbern *Advance*, Daily and Weekly, was again begged to meet a few Whipples in the dingy little office of the First National. The office was unchanged; it had kept through the years since Dave had last illumined its gloom an air of subdued, moneyed discretion. Nor had the Whipples changed much. Harvey D. was still neat-faced and careful of attire, still solicitous of many little things. Gideon, gaunt and dour, was still erect. His hair was white now, but the brows shot their questioning glance straight. Sharon was as he had been, round-chested, plump; perhaps a trifle readier to point the ends of the grizzled brows in

choleric amaze. The Whipple nose on all three still jutted forward boldly. It was a nose never to compromise with Time.

Dave Cowan, at first glance, was much the same, even after he had concealed beneath the table that half of him which was never quite so scrupulously arrayed as the other. But a second glance revealed that the yellow hair was less abundant. It was now cunningly conserved from ear to ear, above a forehead that had heightened. The face was thinner, and etched with new lines about the orator's mouth, but the eyes shone with the same light as of old and the same willingness to shed its beams through shadowed places such as first national banks. He no longer accepted the cigar, to preserve in the upper left-hand waist coat pocket with the fountain pen, the pencil, and the toothbrush. He craved rather permission to fill and light the calabash pipe. This was a mere bit of form, for he was soon talking so continuously that the pipe was no longer a going concern.

Delay was occasioned at the beginning of the interview. It proved to be difficult to convey to Dave exactly why he had been summoned. It appeared that he did not expect a consultation—rather a lecture by Dave Cowan upon life in its larger aspects. The Whipples, strangely, were all not a little embarrassed in his presence, and the mere mention of his son caused him to be informative for ten minutes before any of them dared to confine the flow of his discourse within narrower banks. He dealt volubly with the doctrines espoused by Merle, whereas they wished to be told how to deal with Merle. As he talked he consulted from time to time a sheaf of clippings brought from a pocket.

"A joke," began Dave, "all this socialistic talk. Get this from their platform: They demand that the country and its wealth be redeemed from the control of private interests and turned over to the people to be administered for the equal benefit of all. See what they mean? Going to have a law that a short man can reach as high as a tall man. Good joke, yes? Here again: 'The Socialist Party desires the

workers of America to take the economic and political power from the capitalistic class.' Going to pull themselves off the ground by their boot straps, yes? Have a law to make the weak strong and the strong weak. Reads good, don't it? And here's the prize joke—one big union: Socialist Party does not interfere in the internal affairs of labour unions, but supports them in all their struggles. In order, however, that such struggles might attain the maximum of efficiency the socialists favour the closest organic coöperation of all unions as one organized working body.

"Get that? Lovely, ain't it? And when we're all in one big union, who are we going to strike against? Against ourselves, of course—like we do now. Bricklayers striking against shoemakers and both striking against carpenters, and all of 'em striking against the honest farmer and the farmer striking back, because every one of 'em wants all he can get for his labour and wants to pay as little as he has to for the other fellow's labour. One big union, my eye! Socialists are jokes. You never saw two of 'em yet that could agree on anything for ten minutes—except that they want something for nothing."

The speaker paused impressively. His listeners stirred with relief, but the tide of his speech again washed in upon them.

"They lack," said he, pointing the calabash pipe at Gideon Whipple, sitting patiently across the table from him, "they lack the third eye of wisdom." He paused again, but only as if to await applause. There was no intimation that he had done.

"Dear me!" murmured Gideon, politely. The other Whipples made little sounds of amazement and approval.

"You want to know what the third eye of wisdom is?" continued Dave, as one who had read their secret thought. "Well, it's the simple gift of being able to look at facts as they are instead of twisting 'em about as they ain't. The most of us, savages, uneducated people, simples, and that sort, got this third eye of wisdom without knowing it; we follow the

main current without knowing or asking why. But professors and philosophers and preachers and teachers and all holy rollers like socialists ain't got it. They want to reduce the whole blamed cosmos to a system, and she won't reduce. I forget now just how many billion cells in your body"—he pointed the pipe at Sharon Whipple, who stirred uneasily—"but no matter." Sharon looked relieved.

"Anyway, we fought our way up to be a fish with lungs, and then we fought on till we got legs, and here we are. And the only way we got here was by competition—some of us always beating others. Holy rollers like socialists would have us back to one cell and keep us there with equal rewards for all. But she don't work that way. The pot's still a-boiling, and competition is the eternal fire under it.

"Look at all these imaginary Utopias they write about—good stories, too, about a man waking up three thousand years hence and finding everything lovely. But every one of 'em, and I've read all, picture a society that's froze into some certain condition—static. Nothing is! She won't freeze! They can spray the fire of competition with speeches all they like, but they can't put it out. Because why? Well, because this life thing is going on, and competition is the only way it can get on. Call it Nature if you want to. Nature built star dust out of nothing, and built us out of star dust, but she ain't through; she's still building. Old Evolution is still evoluting, and her only tool is competition, the same under the earth and on the earth, the same out in the sky as in these states.

"Of course there's bound to be flaws and injustice in any scheme of government because of this same competition you can't get away from any more than the planets can. There's flaws in evolution itself, only these holy rollers don't see it, because they haven't got the third eye of wisdom; they can't see that the shoemaker is always going to want all he can get for a pair of shoes and always going to pay as little as he can for his suit of clothes, socialism or no socialism.

"What would their one big union be? Take these unions

that are striking now all over the country. They think they're striking against something they call capital. Well, they ain't. They're striking against each other. Railroad men striking against bricklayers, shoemakers striking against farmers, machinists striking against cabinetmakers, printers striking against all of 'em—and the fools don't know it; think they're striking against some common enemy, when all the time they're hitting against each other. Oh, she's a grand bit of cunning, this Old Evolution."

"This is all very interesting, Mr. Cowan"—Harvey D. had become uneasy in his chair, and had twice risen to put straight a photograph of the Whipple block that hung on the opposite wall—"but what we would like to get at——"

"I know, I know"—Dave silenced him with a wave of the calabash—"you want to know what it's all about—what it's coming to, what we're here for. Well, I can tell you a little. There used to be a catch in it that bothered me, but I figured her out. Old Evolution is producing an organism that will find the right balance and perpetuate itself eternally. It's trying every way it knows to get these cells of protoplasm into some form that will change without dying. Simple enough, only it takes time. Think how long it took to get us this far out of something you can't see without glasses! But forget about time. Our time don't mean anything out there in the real world. Say we been produced in one second from nothing; well, think what we'll become in another ten seconds. We'll have our balance by that time. This protoplasm does what it's told to do—that's how it made eyes for us to see, and ears to hear, and brains to think with—so by that time we'll be really living; we'll have a form that's plastic, and can change round to meet any change of environment, so we won't have to die if it gets too cold or too hot. We want to live—we all want to live; by that time we'll be able to go on living.

"Of course we won't be looking much like we are now; we're pretty clumsy machines so far. I suppose, for one thing, we'll be getting our nourishment straight from the

elements instead of taking it through plants and animals. We'll be as superior to what we are now as he is to a hoptoad." The speaker indicated Sharon Whipple with the calabash. Sharon wriggled self-consciously. "And pretty soon people will forget that any one ever died; they won't believe it when they read it in old books; they won't understand it. This time is coming, as near as I can figure it, in seven hundred and fifty thousand years. That is, in round numbers, it might be an odd hundred thousand years more or less. Of course I can't be precise in such a matter."

"Of course not," murmured Harvey D., sympathetically; "but what we were wanting to get at——"

"Of course," resumed the lecturer, "I know there's still a catch in it. You say, 'What does it mean after that?' Well, I'll be honest with you, I haven't been able to figure it out much farther. We'll go on and on till this earth dries up, and then we'll move to another, or build one—I can't tell which—and all the time we're moving round something, but I don't know what or why. I only know it's been going on forever—this life thing—and we're a little speck in the current, and it will keep going on forever.

"But you can bet this: It will always go on by competition. There won't ever be any Utopia, like these holy rollers can lay out for you in five minutes. I been watching union labour long enough to know that. But she's a grand scheme. I'm glad I got this little look at it. I wouldn't change it in any detail, not if you come to me with full power. I couldn't think of any better way than competition, not if I took a lifetime to it. It's a sporty proposition."

The speaker beamed modestly upon his hearers. Gideon was quick to clutch the moment's pause.

"What about this boy Merle?" he demanded before Dave could resume.

"Oh, him?" said Dave. "Him and his holy rolling? Is that all you want to know? Why didn't you say so? That's easy! You've raised him to be a house cat. So shut off his cream."

"A house cat!" echoed Harvey D., shocked.

"No education," resumed Dave. "No savvy about the world. Set him down in Spokane with three dollars in his jeans and needing to go to Atlanta. Would he know how? Would he know a simple thing like how to get there and ride all the way in varnished cars?"

"Is it possible?" murmured Harvey D.

The Whipples had been dazed by the cosmic torrent, but here was something specific—and it was astounding. They regarded the speaker with awe. They wanted to be told how one could perform the feat, but dreaded to incur a too-wordy exposition.

"Not practical enough, I dare say," ventured Harvey D.

"You said it!" replied Dave. "That's why he's took this scarlet rash of socialism and holy rolling that's going the rounds. Of course there are plenty that are holy rollers through and through, but not this boy. It's only a skin disease with him. I know him. Shut off his cream."

"I said the same!" declared Sharon Whipple, feeling firm ground beneath his feet for the first time.

"You said right!" approved Dave. "It would be a shock to him," said Harvey D. "He's bound up in the magazine. What would he say? What would he do?"

"Something pretty," explained Dave. "Something pretty and high-sounding. Like as not he'd cast you off."

"Cast me off!" Harvey D. was startled.

"Tell you you are no longer a father of his. Don't I know that boy? He'll half mean it, too, but only half. The other half will be showing off—showing off to himself and to you people. He likes to be noticed."

Sharon Whipple now spoke.

"I always said he wouldn't be a socialist if he couldn't be a millionaire socialist."

"You got him!" declared Dave.

"I shall hate to adopt extreme measures," protested Harvey D. "He's always been so sensitive. But we must

consider his welfare. In a time like this he might be sent to prison for things printed in that magazine."

"Trust him!" said Dave. "He wouldn't like it in prison. He might get close enough to it to be photographed with the cell door back of him—but not in front of him."

"He'll tell us we're suppressing free speech," said Harvey D.

"Well, you will be, won't you?" said Dave. "We ain't so fussy about free speech here as they are in that free Russia that he writes about, but we're beginning to take notice. Naturally it's a poor time for free speech when the Government's got a boil on the back of its neck and is feeling irritable. Besides, no one ever did believe in free speech, and no government on earth ever allowed it. Free speakers have always had to use judgment. Up to now we've let 'em be free-speakinger than any other country has, but now they better watch out until the boat quits rocking. They attack the machinery and try to take it apart, and then cry when they're smacked. Maybe they might get this boy the other side of a cell door. Wouldn't hurt him any."

"Of course," protested Harvey D., "we can hardly expect you to have a father's feeling for him."

"Well, I have!" retorted Dave. "I got just as much father's feeling for him as you have. But you people are small-towners, and I been about in the world. I know the times and I know that boy. I'm telling you what's best for him. No more cream! If it had been that other boy of mine you took, and he was believing what this one thinks he believes, I'd be telling you something different."

"Always said he had the gumption," declared Sharon Whipple.

"He's got the third eye," said Dave Cowan.

"We want to thank you for this talk," interposed Gideon Whipple. "Much of what you have said is very, very interesting. I think my son will now know what course to pursue."

"Don't mention it!" said Dave, graciously. "Always glad to oblige."

The consultation seemed about to end, but even at the door of the little room Dave paused to acquaint them with other interesting facts about life. He informed them that we are all brothers of the earth, being composed of carbon and a few other elements, and grow from it as do the trees; that we are but super-vegetables. He further instructed them as to the constitution of a balanced diet—protein for building, starches or sugar for energy, and fats for heating and also for their vitamine content.

The Whipples, it is to be feared, were now inattentive. They appeared to listen, but they were merely surveying with acute interest the now revealed lower half of Dave Cowan. The trousers were frayed, the shoes were but wraiths of shoes. The speaker, quite unconscious of this scrutiny, concluded by returning briefly to the problems of human association.

"We'll have socialism when every man is like every other man. So far Nature hasn't made even two alike. Anyway, most of us got the third eye of wisdom too wide open to take any stock in it. We may like it when we read it in a book, but we wouldn't submit to it. We're too inquiring. If a god leaned out of a cloud of fire and spoke to us to-day we'd put the spectroscope on his cloud, get a moving picture of him, and take his voice on a phonograph record; and we wouldn't believe him if he talked against experience."

Dave surveyed the obscure small-towners with a last tolerant smile and withdrew.

"My!" said Gideon, which for him was strong speech.

"Talks like an atheist," said Sharon.

"Mustn't judge him harshly," warned Harvey D.

So it came that Merle Dalton Whipple, born Cowan, was rather peremptorily summoned to meet these older Whipples at another conference. It was politely termed a conference by Harvey D., though Sharon warmly urged a simpler description of the meeting, declaring that Merle should be told he was to come home and behave himself. Harvey D. and

Gideon, however, agreed upon the more tactful summons. They discussed, indeed, the propriety of admitting Sharon to the conference. Each felt that he might heedlessly offend the young intellectual by putting things with a bluntness for which he had often been conspicuous. Yet they agreed at last that he might be present, for each secretly distrusted his own firmness in the presence of one with so strong an appeal as their boy. They admonished Sharon to be gentle. But each hoped that if the need rose he would cease to be gentle.

Merle obeyed the call, and in the library of the Whipple New Place, where once he had been chosen to bear the name of the house, he listened with shocked amazement while Harvey D., with much worried straightening of pictures, rugs, and chairs, told him why Whipple money could no longer meet the monthly deficit of the *New Dawn*. The most cogent reason that Harvey D. could advance at first was that there were too many Liberty Bonds to be bought.

Merle, with his world-weary gesture, swept the impeding lock from his pale brow and set pained eyes upon his father by adoption. He was unable to believe this monstrous assertion. He stared his incredulity. Harvey D. winced. He felt that he had struck some defenseless child a cruel blow. Gideon shot the second gun in this unhuman warfare.

"My boy, it won't do. Harvey is glossing it a bit when he says the money is needed for bonds. You deserve the truth—we are not going to finance any longer a magazine that is against all our traditions and all our sincerest beliefs."

"Ah, I see," said Merle. His tone was grim. Then he broke into a dry, bitter laugh. "The interests prevail!"

"Looks like it," said Sharon, and he, too, laughed dryly.

"If you would only try to get our point of view," broke in Harvey D. "We feel——"

He was superbly silenced by Merle, who in his best *New Dawn* manner exposed the real truth. The dollar trembled on its throne, the fat bourgeoisie—he spared a withering glance for Sharon, who was the only fat Whipple in the world

—would resort to brutal force to silence those who saw the truth and were brave enough to speak it out.

"It's the age-old story," he went on, again sweeping the lock of hair from before his flashing glance. "Privilege throttles truth where it can. I should have expected nothing else; I have long known there was no soil here that would nourish our ideals. I couldn't long hope for sympathy from mere exploiters of labour. But the die is cast. God helping me, I must follow the light."

The last was purely rhetorical, for no one on the staff of the *New Dawn* believed that God helped any one. Indeed, it was rather felt that God was on the side of privilege. But the speaker glowed as he achieved his period.

"If you would only try to get our point of view," again suggested Harvey D., as he straightened the Reading From Homer.

"I cannot turn aside."

"Meaning?" inquired Sharon Whipple.

"Meaning that we cannot accept another dollar of tainted money for our great work," said Merle, crisply.

"Oh," said Sharon, "but that's what your pa just told you! You accepted it till he shut off on you."

"Against my better judgment and with many misgivings," returned the apostle of light. "Now we can go to the bitter end with no false sense of obligation."

"But your magazine will have to stop, I fear," interposed Gideon gently.

Merle smiled wanly, shaking his head the while as one who contradicts from superior knowledge.

"You little know us," he retorted when the full effect of the silent, head-shaking smile had been had. "The people are at last roused. Money will pour in upon us. Money is the last detail we need think of. Our movement is solidly grounded. We have at our back"—he glanced defiantly at each of the three Whipples—"an awakened proletariate."

"My!" said Gideon.

"You are out of the current here," explained Merle, kindly.

"You don't suspect how close we are to revolution. Yet that glorious rising of our comrades in Russia might have warned you. But your class, of course, never is warned."

"Dear me!" broke in Harvey D. "You don't mean to say that conditions are as bad here as they were in Russia?"

"Worse—a thousand times worse," replied Merle. "We have here an autocracy more hateful, more hideous in its injustices, than ever the Romanoffs dreamed of. And how much longer do you think these serfs of ours will suffer it? I tell you they are roused this instant! They await only a word!"

"Are you going to speak it?" demanded Sharon.

"Now, now!" soothed Harvey D. as Merle turned heatedly upon Sharon, who thus escaped blasting.

"I am not here to be baited," protested Merle.

"Of course not, my boy," said the distressed Harvey D.

Merle faced the latter.

"I need not say that this decision of yours—this abrupt withdrawal, of your coöperation—must make a profound difference in our relations. I feel the cause too deeply for it to be otherwise. You understand?"

"He's casting you off," said Sharon, "like the other one said he would."

"*Ssh!*" It was Gideon.

"I shall stay no longer to listen to mere buffoonery," and for the last time that night Merle swept back the ever-falling lock. He paused at the door. "The old spirit of intolerance," he said. "You are the sort who wouldn't accept truth in France in 1789, or in Russia the other day." And so he left them.

"My!" exclaimed Gideon, forcefully.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Harvey D.

"Shucks!" exclaimed Sharon.

"But the boy is goaded to desperation!" protested Harvey D.

"Listen!" urged Sharon. "Remember what his own father said! He's only half goaded. The other half is showing

off—to himself and us. That man knew his own flesh and blood. And listen again! You sit tight if you want to get him back to reason!"

"Brother, I think you're right," said Gideon.

"Dear me!" said Harvey D. He straightened an etched cathedral, and then with a brush from the hearth swept cigar ashes deeper into the rug about the chair of Sharon. "Dear me!" he sighed again.

Early the following morning Merle Whipple halted before the show window of Newbern's chief establishment purveying ready-made clothing for men. He was about to undergo a novel experience and one that would have profoundly shocked his New York tailors. There were suits in the window, fitted to forms with glovelike accuracy. He studied these disapprovingly, then entered the shop.

"I want," he told the salesman, "something in a rough, coarse, common-looking suit—something such as a day labourer might wear."

The salesman was momentarily puzzled, yet seemed to see light.

"Yes, sir—right this way, sir," and he led his customer back between the lines of tables piled high with garments. He halted and spanned the chest of the customer with a tape measure. From halfway down a stack of coats he pulled one of the proper size.

"Here's a snappy thing, sir, fitted in at the back—belted—cuffs on the trousers, neat check——"

But the customer waved it aside impatiently.

"No, no! I want something common—coarse cloth, roughly made, no style; it mustn't fit too well."

The salesman deliberated sympathetically.

"Ah, I see—masquerade, sir?"

The customer again manifested impatience.

"No, no! A suit such as a day labourer might wear—a factory worker, one of the poorer class."

The salesman heightened his manifestation of sympathy.

"Well, sir"—he deliberated, tapping his brow with a pencil, scanning the long line of garments—"I'm afraid we're not stocked with what you wish. Best go to a costumer, sir, and rent one for the night perhaps."

The customer firmly pushed back a pendent lock of hair and became impressive.

"I tell you it is not for a masquerade or any foolishness of that sort. I wish a plain, roughly made, common-looking suit of clothes, not too well fitting—the sort of things working people wear, don't you understand?"

"But certainly, sir; I understand perfectly. This coat here is what the working people are buying; sold a dozen suits myself this week to some of the mill workers—very natty, sir, and only sixty-five dollars. If you'll look closely at the workers about town you'll see the same suits—right dressy, you'll notice. I'm afraid the other sort of thing has gone a little out of style; in fact, I don't believe you'll be able to find a suit such as you describe. They're not being made. Workers are buying this sort of garment." He picked up the snappy belted coat and fondled its nap affectionately. "Of course, for a fancy-dress party——"

"No, no, no! I tell you it isn't a masquerade!"

The salesman seemed at a loss for further suggestions. The customer's eye lighted upon a pile of coats farther down the line.

"What are those?"

"Those? Corduroy, sir. Splendid garments—suitable for the woods, camping, hunting, fishing. We're well stocked with hunting equipment. Will you look at them?"

"I suppose so," said the customer, desperately.

Late that afternoon the three older Whipples, on the piazza of the Whipple New Place, painfully discussed the scene of the previous evening. It was felt by two of them that some tragic event impended. Sharon alone was cheerful. From time to time he admonished the other two to sit tight.

"He'll tell you you ain't any longer a father of his, or a grandfather, either, but sit tight!"

He had said this when Merle appeared before them as a car drew up to the door. There was an immediate sensation from which even Sharon was not immune. For Merle was garbed in corduroy, and the bagging trousers were stuffed into the tops of heavy, high-laced boots. The coat was belted but loose fitting. The exposed shirt was of brown flannel, and the gray felt hat was low-crowned and broad of brim. The hat was firmly set on the wearer's head, and about his neck was a wreath of colour—a knotted handkerchief of flaming scarlet.

The three men stared at him in silent stupefaction. He seemed about to pass them on his way to the waiting car, but then paused and confronted them, his head back. He laughed his bitter laugh.

"Does it seem strange to see me in the dress of a common workingman?" he demanded.

"Dress of a what?" demanded Sharon Whipple. The other ignored this.

"You have consigned me to the ranks," he continued, chiefly to Harvey D. "I must work with my hands for the simple fare that my comrades are able to gain with their own toil. I must dress as one of them. It's absurdly simple."

"My!" exclaimed Gideon.

Harvey D. was suffering profoundly, but all at once his eyes flashed with alarm.

"Haven't those boots nails in them?" he suddenly demanded.

"I dare say they have."

"And you've been going across the hardwood floors?" demanded Harvey D. again.

"This is too absurd!" said Merle, grimly.

Harvey D. hesitated, then smiled, his alarm vanishing.

"Of course I was absurd," he admitted, contritely. "I know you must have kept on the rugs."

"Oh, oh!" Again came the dry, bitter laugh of Merle.

"Say," broke in Sharon, "you want to take a good long look at the next workingman you see."

Merle swept him with a glance of scorn. He stepped into the waiting car.

"I could no longer brook this spirit of intolerance, but I'm taking nothing except the clothes I'm wearing," he reminded Harvey D. "I go to my comrades barehanded." He adjusted the knot of crimson at his white throat. "But they will not be barehanded long, remember that!"

Nathan Marwick started the car along the driveway. Merle was seen to order a halt.

"Of course, for a time, at least, I shall keep the New York apartment. My address will be the same."

The car went on.

"Did that father know his own flesh and blood—I ask you?" demanded Sharon.

"Dear me, dear me!" sighed Harvey D.

"Poor young thing!" said Gideon.

Merle, on his way to the train, thought of his hat. He had not been able to feel confidence in that hat. There was a trimness about it, an assertive glamour, an air of success, that should not stamp one of the oppressed. He had gone to the purchase of it with vague notions that a labouring man, at least while actually labouring, wears a square cap of paper which he has made himself. So he was crowned in all cartoons. But, of course, this paper thing would not do for street wear, and the hat he now wore was the least wealth-suggesting he had been able to find. He now decided that a cap would be better. He seemed to remember that the toiling masses wore a lot of caps.

CHAPTER XVIII

A WEEK later one of the New York evening papers printed an inspiring view of Merle Dalton Whipple in what was said to be the rough garb of the workingman. He stanchly fronted the world in a corduroy suit and high-laced boots, a handkerchief knotted at his throat above a flannel shirt, and a somewhat proletarian cap set upon his well-posed head. The caption ran: "Young Millionaire Socialist Leaves Life of Luxury to be Simple Toiler."

A copy of this enterprising sheet, addressed in an unknown hand, arrived at the Whipple New Place, to further distress the bereft family. Only Sharon Whipple was not distressed. He remarked that the toiler was not so simple as some people might think, and he urged that an inquiry be set on foot to discover the precise nature of the toil now being engaged in by this recruit to the ranks of labour. He added that he himself would be glad to pay ninety dollars a month and board to any toiler worth his salt, because Juliana was now his only reliable helper, and it did seem as if she would never learn to run a tractor, she having no gift for machinery. If Merle Whipple was bent on toil, why should he not come to the Home Farm, where plenty of it could be had for the asking?

Both Harvey D. and Gideon rebuked him for this levity, reminding him that he did not take into account the extreme sensitiveness of Merle.

Sharon merely said: "Mebbe so, mebbe not."

There came another issue of the *New Dawn*. It was a live issue, and contained a piece by the associate editor entitled, This Unpopular War, in which it was clearly shown that this war was unpopular. It was unpopular with every

one the writer had questioned; no one wanted it, every one condemned it, even those actually engaged in it at Washington. The marvel was that an army could continue to go forward with existing public sentiment as the *New Dawn* revealed it. But a better day was said to be dawning. The time was at hand when an end would be put to organized exploitation and murder, which was all that the world had thus far been able to evolve in the way of a government.

In a foreword to the readers of the *New Dawn*, however, a faintly ominous note was sounded. It appeared that the interests had heinously conspired to suppress the magazine because of its loyalty to the ideals of free thought and free speech. In short, its life was menaced. Support was withdrawn by those who had suddenly perceived that the *New Dawn* meant the death of privilege; that "this flowering of mature and seasoned personalities" threatened the supremacy of the old order of industrial slavery. The mature and seasoned personalities had sounded the prelude to the revolution which "here bloodily, there peaceably, and beginning with Russia, would sweep the earth." Capital, affrighted, had drawn back. It was therefore now necessary that the readers of the *New Dawn* bear their own burden. If they would send in money in such sums as they could spare—and it was felt that these would flow in abundantly upon a hint—the magazine would continue and the revolution be a matter of days. It was better, after all, that the cause should no longer look to capital for favours. Contributors were to sign on the dotted line.

There were no more *New Dawns*. The forces of privilege had momentarily prevailed, or the proletariat had been insufficiently roused to its plight. The *New Dawn* stopped, and in consequence the war went on. For a time, at least, America must continue in that spiritual darkness which the *New Dawn* had sought to illumine.

Later it became known in Newbern that the staff of the *New Dawn* would now deliver its message by word of mouth. Specifically, Merle Whipple was said to be addressing throngs

of despairing toilers not only in New York, but in places as remote as Chicago. Sharon Whipple now called him a crimson rambler.

Meanwhile, news of the other Cowan twin trickled into Newbern through letters from Winona Penniman, a nurse with the forces overseas. During her months of training in New York the epistolary style of Winona had maintained its old leisurely elegance, but early in the year of 1918 it suffered severely under the strain of active service and became blunt to the point of crudeness. The morale of her nice phrases had been shattered seemingly beyond restoration.

"D—n this war!" began one letter to her mother. "We had influenza aboard coming over and three nurses died and were buried at sea. Also, one of our convoy foundered in a storm; I saw men clinging to the wreck as she went down.

"Can it be that I once lived in that funny little town where they make a fuss about dead people—flowers and a casket and a clergyman and careful burial? With us it's something to get out of the way at once. And life has always been this, and I never knew it, even if we did take the papers at home. Ha, ha! Yes, I can laugh, even in the face of it. 'Life is real, life is earnest'—how that line comes back to me with new force!"

A succeeding letter from a base hospital somewhere in France spelled in full certain words that had never before polluted Winona's pen. Brazenly she abandoned the seemly reticence of dashes.

"Damn all the war!" she wrote; and again: "War is surely more hellish than hell could be!"

"Mercy! Can the child be using such words in actual talk?" demanded Mrs. Penniman of the judge, to whom she read the letter.

"More'n likely," declared the judge. "War makes 'em forget their home training. Wouldn't surprise me if she went from bad to worse. It's just a life of profligacy she's leadin'—you can't tell me."

"Nonsense!" snapped the mother.

"'And whom do you think I had a nice little visit with two days ago? He was on his way up to the front again, and it was our Wilbur. He's been in hot fighting three times already, but so far unscathed. But oh, how old he looks, and so severe and grim and muddy! He says he is the worst-scared man in the whole Army, bar none. He thought at first he would get over his fright, but each time he goes in he hates worse and worse to be shot at, and will positively never come to like it. He says the only way he can get over being frightened is to go on until he becomes very, very angry, and then he can forget it for a time. You can tell by his face that it would be easy to anger him.

"'But do not think he is cowardly, even if habitually frightened, because I also talked with his captain, who is an outspoken man, and he tells me that Wilbur is a regular fighting so-and-so. These were his very words. They are army slang, and mean that he is a brave soldier. A young man, a Mr. Edward Brennon from Newbern, a sort of athlete, came over with him, and they have been constantly together. I did not see this this Mr. Brennon, but I hear that he, too, is gallantly great, and also a regular fighting so-and-so, as these rough men put it in their slang.

"'Wilbur spoke of Merle's writing about the war, and about America's being rotten to the core because of capital that people want to keep from the workingman, and he says he now sees that Merle must have been misled; as he puts it in his crude, forceful way, this man's country has come to stay. He says that is what he always says to himself when he has to go over the top, while he is still scared and before he grows angry—"This man's country has come to stay." He says this big American Army would laugh at many of Merle's speeches about America and the war. He says the country is greater than any magazine, even the best. Now my rest hour is over, and I must go in where they are doing terrible things to these poor men. For a week I have been on my feet eighteen hours out of each twenty-four. I have just

time for another tiny cigarette before going into that awful smell.'

"Mercy!" cried the amazed mother.

"There you are!" retorted the judge. "Let her go into the Army and she takes up smoking. War leads to dissipation—ask any one."

"I must send her some," declared Mrs. Penniman; "or I wonder if she rolls her own?"

"Yes, and pretty soon we'll have the whole house stenched up worse'n what Dave Cowan's pipe does it," grumbled the judge. "The idee of a girl of her years taking up cigarettes! A good thing the country's going dry. Them that smoke usually drink."

"High time the girl had some fun," returned his wife, placidly.

"Needn't be shameless about it," grumbled the judge. "A good woman has to draw the line somewhere."

The unbending moralist later protested that Winona's letters should not be read to her friends. But Mrs. Penniman proved stubborn. She softened no word of Winona's strong language, and she betrayed something like a guilty pride in revealing that her child was now a hopeless tobacco addict.

A month later Winona further harassed the judge.

"'I think only about life and death,'" read Mrs. Penniman, "'and I'm thinking now that the real plan of things is something greater than either of them. It is not rounded out by our dying in the right faith. Somehow it must go on and on, always in struggle and defeat. I used to think, of course, that our religious faith was the only true one, but now I must tell you I don't know what I am.'"

"My Lord!" groaned the horrified judge. "The girl's an atheist! That's what people are when they don't know what they are. First swearing, then smoking cigarettes, now forsaking her religion. Mark my words, she's coming home an abandoned woman!"

"Stuff!" said Mrs. Penniman, crisply. "She's having a

great experience. Listen! 'You should see them die here, in all faiths—Jews, Catholics, Protestants, and very, very many who have never enjoyed the consolation of any religious teachings whatsoever. But they all die alike, and you may think me dreadful for saying it, but I know their reward will be equal. I don't know if I will come out of it myself, but I don't think about that, because it seems unimportant. The scheme—you remember Dave Cowan always talking about the scheme—the scheme is so big, that dying doesn't matter one bit if you die trying for something. I couldn't argue about this, but I know it and these wonderful boys must know it when they go smiling straight into death. They know it without any one ever having told them. Sometimes I get to thinking of my own little set beliefs about a hereafter—those I used to hold—and they seem funny to me!'"

"There!" The judge waved triumphantly. "Now she's makin' fun of the church! That's what comes of gittin' in with that fast Army set."

Mrs. Penniman ignored this.

"'Patricia Whipple feels the same way I do about these matters; more intensely if that were possible. I had a long talk with her yesterday. She has been doing a wonderful work in our section. She is one of us that can stand anything, any sort of horrible operation, and never faint, as some of the nurses have done. She is apparently at such times a thing of steel, a machine, but she feels intensely when it is over and she lets down.

"'You wouldn't know her. Thin and drawn, but can work twenty hours at a stretch and be ready for twenty more next day. She is on her way up to a first-aid station, which I myself would not be equal to. It is terrible enough at this base hospital. For one who has been brought up as she has, gently nurtured, looked after every moment, she is amazing. And, as I say, she feels as I do about life and death and the absurd little compartments into which we used to pack religion. She says she expects never to get back home,

because the world is coming to an end. You would not be surprised at her thinking this if you could see what she has to face. She is a different girl. We are both different. We won't ever be the same again.'"

"Wha'd I tell you? "demanded the judge.

"'The war increases in violence—dreadful sights, dreadful smells. I am so glad Merle's eyes kept him out of it. He would have been ill fitted for this turmoil. Wilbur was the one for it. I saw him a few minutes the other day, on his way to some place I mustn't write down. He said: "Do you know what I wish?" I said: "No; what do you wish?" He said: "I wish I was back in the front yard, squirting water on the lawn and flower beds, where no one would be shooting at me, and it was six o'clock and there was going to be fried chicken for supper and one of those deep-dish apple pies without any bottom to it, that you turn upside down and pour maple sirup on. That's what I wish."'"

"Always thinking of his stomach!" muttered the judge.

"'But he has gone on, and I can't feel distressed, even though I know it is probable he will never come back. I know it won't make any difference in the real plan, and that it is only important that he keep on being a fighting so-and-so, as they say in the Army. It is not that I am callous, but I have come to get a larger view of death—mere death. I said good-bye to him for probably the last time with as little feeling as I would have said good-bye to Father on departing for a three-days' trip to the city.'"

"Naturally she'd forget her parents," said the judge. "That's what it leads to."

Late in June of that year the shattered remains of a small town somewhere in France, long peaceful with the peace of death, became noisy with a strange new life. Two opposing and frenzied lines of traffic clashed along the road that led through it and became a noisy jumble in the little square at its centre, a disordered mass of camions, artillery, heavy supply wagons, field kitchens, ambulances, with

motorcycles at its edges like excited terriers, lending a staccato vivacity to its uproar..

Artillery and soldiers went forward; supply wagons, empty, and ambulances, not empty, poured back in unending succession; and only the marching men, gaunt shapes in the dust, were silent. They came from a road to the south, an undulating double line of silent men in dust-grayed khaki, bent under a burden of field equipment, stepping swiftly along the narrow, stone-paved street, heads down, unheeding the jagged ruin of small shops and dwellings that flanked the way. Reaching the square, they turned to cross a makeshift bridge—beside one of stone that had spanned the little river but now lay broken in its shallow bed. Beyond this stream they followed a white road that wound gently up a sere hill between rows of blasted poplars. At the top of the rise two shining lines of helmets undulated rhythmically below the view.

At moments the undulations would cease and the lines dissolve. The opposing streams of traffic would merge in a tangle beyond extrication until a halt enabled each to go its way. A sun-shot mist of fine dust softened all lines until from a little distance the figures of men and horses and vehicles were but twisting, yellowish phantoms, strangely troubled, strangely roaring.

At these times the lines of marching men, halted by some clumsy clashing of war machines, instantly became mere huddles of fatigue by the wayside, falling to earth like rows of standing blocks sent over by a child's touch.

Facing the square was a small stone church that had been mistreated. Its front was barred by tumbled masonry, but a well-placed shell had widely breached its side wall. Through this timbered opening could be seen rows of cots hovered over by nurses or white-clad surgeons. Their forms flashed with a subdued radiance far back in the shaded interior. Litter bearers came and went.

From the opening now issued a red-faced private, bulky with fat. One of his eyes was hidden from the public by a

bandage, but the other surveyed the milling traffic with a humorous tolerance. Though propelling himself with crutches, he had contrived to issue from the place with an air of careless sauntering. Tenderly he eased his bulk to a flat stone, aforetime set in the church's façade, and dropped a crutch at either side. He now readjusted his hat, for the bandage going up over his shock of reddish hair had affected its fit. Next he placed an inquiring but entirely respectful palm over the bandaged eye.

"Never was such a hell of a good eye, anyhow," he observed, and winked the unhidden eye in testimony of his wit. Then he plucked from back of an ear a half-smoked cigarette, relighted this, and leered humorously at the spreading tangle before him.

"Naughty, naughtykins!" he called to a driver of four mules who had risen finely to an emergency demanding sheer language. "First chance I had to get a good look at the war, what with one thing and another," he amiably explained to a sergeant of infantry who was passing.

Neither of his sallies evoked a response, but he was not rebuffed. He wished to engage in badinage, but he was one who could entertain himself if need be. He looked about for other diversion.

To the opening in the church wall came a nurse. She walked with short, uncertain steps and leaned against the ragged edge of the wall, with one arm along its stone for support. Her face was white and drawn, and for a moment she closed her eyes and breathed deeply of the dust-laden air. The fat private on the stone, a score of feet away, studied her approvingly. She was slight of form and her hair beneath the cap was of gold, a little tarnished. He waited for her eyes to open, then hailed her genially as he waved at a tangle of camions and ambulances now blocking the bridge.

"Worse'n fair week back home on Main Street, hey, sister?"

But she did not hear him, for a battered young second

lieutenant with one arm in a sling had joined her from the dusk of the church.

"Done up, nurse?" he demanded.

"Only for a second. We just finished something pretty fierce."

She pointed back of her, but without looking.

"Why not sit down on that stone?"

He indicated a fallen slab at her feet. She looked at it with frank longing, but smiled a refusal.

"Dassent," she said. "I'd be asleep in no time."

"Cheer up! We'll soon finish this man's job."

The girl looked at him with eyes already freshened.

"No, it won't ever be finished. It's going on forever. Nothing but war and that inside."

Again she pointed back without turning her head.

"Another jam!"

The second lieutenant waved toward the makeshift bridge. The girl watched the muddle of wheeled things and stiffened with indignation.

"That's why it'll last so long," she said. "Because these officers of ours can't learn anything. Look at that muddle—while men are dying on beyond. You'd think they were a lot of schoolboys. Haven't they been told to keep one road for their up traffic and another road for their down traffic? But they wouldn't do it, because it was the British who told 'em. But the British had found out, hadn't they? Catch them having a senseless mix-up like that! But our men won't listen. They won't even listen to me. I've told one general and six or seven colonels only this morning. Told the general to keep certain roads for troops and wagons going to the front, and other roads of traffic coming back to camps and depots, and all he could say was that he hoped to God there wouldn't be another war until the women could staff it."

"Hooray, hooray!" squeaked the listening private in a subdued falsetto not meant to be overheard.

Then he turned to stare up the street of broken shop fronts.

One of these diverted his attention from the nurse. Above its door protruded a bush, its leaves long since withered. He knew this for the sign of a wine shop, and with much effort regained his feet to hobble toward it. He went far enough to note that the bush broke its promise of refreshment, for back of it was but dry desolation.

"*Napoo!*" he murmured in his best French, and turned to measure the distance back to his stone seat. To this he again sauntered carelessly, as a gentleman walking abroad over his estate.

The second lieutenant was leaving the nurse by the extemporized portal of the church, though she seemed not to have done with exposing the incompetence of certain staff officers. She still leaned wearily against the wall, vocal with irritation.

"Bawl 'em out, sister! I think anything you think," called the private.

Then from his stone seat he turned to survey the double line of marching men that issued from the street into the square. They came now to a shuffling halt at a word of command relayed from some place beyond the bridge, where a new jumble of traffic could be dimly discerned. The lines fell apart and the men sank to earth in the shade of the broken buildings across the square. The private waved them a careless hand, with the mild interest of one who has been permanently dissevered from their activities.

One of them slouched over, gave the private a new cigarette, and slouched back to his resting mates. In the act of lighting the cigarette the fat private noted that another of these reclining figures had risen and was staring fixedly either at him or at something beyond him. He turned and perceived that the nurse and not himself must be the object of this regard.

The risen private came on a dozen paces, halted hesitatingly, and stared once more. The nurse, who had drooped again after the departure of the second lieutenant, now drew a long breath, threw up her shoulders, and half turned as if to

reënter the church. The hesitating private, beholding the new angle of her face thus revealed to him, darted swiftly forward with a cry that was formless but eloquent. The nurse stayed motionless, but with eyes widened upon the approaching figure. The advancing private had risen wearily, and his first steps toward the church had been tired, dragging steps, but for the later distance he became agile and swift, running as one refreshed. The fat private on the stone observed the little play.

The couple stood at last, tensely, face to face. The watcher beheld the girl's eyes rest with wild wonder upon the newcomer, eyes that were steady, questioning green flames. He saw her form stiffen, her shoulders go back, her arms rise, her clenched hands spread apart in a gesture that was something of fear but all of allure. The newcomer's own hands widened to meet hers, the girl's wrists writhed into his tightened grasp, her own hands clasped his arms and crept slowly, tightly along the dusty sleeves of his blouse. Still her eyes were eyes of wild wonder, searching his face. They had not spoken, but now the hands of each clutched the shoulders of the other for the briefest of seconds. Then came a swift enveloping manœuvre, and the girl was held in a close embrace.

The watching private studied the mechanics of this engagement with an expert eye. He saw the girl's arms run to tighten about the soldier's neck. He saw her face lift. The soldier's helmet obscured much of what ensued, and the watcher called softly: "Hats off in front!" Then fastidiously dusting the back of one hand, he kissed it audibly. Behind him, across the square, a score of recumbent privates were roused to emulation. Dusting the backs of their hands they kissed them both tenderly and audibly.

The two by the church were oblivious of this applause. Their arms still held each other. Neither had spoken. The girl's face was set in wonder, in shining unbelief, yet a little persuaded. They were apart the reach of their arms.

"As you were!" ordered the fat private in low tones, and

with a little rush they became as they were. Again the girl's arms ran to tighten about the soldier's neck. The watcher noticed their earnest constrictions.

"I bet that lad never reads his dice wrong," he murmured, admiringly. "Oh, lady, lady! Will you watch him June her!"

He here became annoyed to observe that his cigarette had been burning wastefully. He snapped off its long ash and drew tremendously upon it. The two were still close, but now they talked. He heard sounds of amazement, of dismay, from the girl.

"Put a comether on her before she knew it," explained the private to himself.

There followed swift, broken murmurs, incoherent, annoyingly, to the listener, but the soldier's arms had not relaxed and the arms of the girl were visibly compressed about his neck. Then they fell half apart once more. The watcher saw that the girl was weeping, convulsed with long, dry, shuddering sobs.

"As you were!" he again commanded, and the order was almost instantly obeyed.

Presently they talked again, quick, short speech, provokingly blurred to the private's ears.

"Louder!" he commanded. "We can't hear at the back of the hall."

The muffled talk went on, one hand of the girl ceaselessly patting the shoulder where it had rested.

Now a real command came. The line of men rose, its head by the bridge coming up first. The pair by the church drew apart, blended again momentarily. The soldier sped back to his place, leaving the girl erect, head up, her shining eyes upon him. He did not look back. The line was marking time.

The fat private saw his moment. He reached for his crutches and laboriously came to his feet. Hands belled before his mouth, he trumpeted ringingly abroad: "Let the war go on!"

An officer, approaching from the bridge, seemed suddenly to be stricken with blindness, deafness, and a curious facial paralysis.

Once more the column undulated over the tawny crest of the hill. The nurse stood watching, long after her soldier had become indistinguishable in the swinging, grayish-brown mass.

"Hey, nurse!" the fat private, again seated, called to her.

To his dismay she came to stand beside him, refreshed, radiant.

"What you think of the war?" he asked.

He was embarrassed by her nearness. He had proposed badinage at a suitable distance.

"This war is nothing," said the girl.

"No?" The private was entertained.

"Nothing! A bore, of course, but it will end in a minute."

"Sure it will!" agreed the private. "Don't let no one tell you different."

"I should think not! This man's war won't bother me any more."

"Not any more?" demanded the private with insinuating emphasis.

"Not any more."

The private felt emboldened.

"Say, sister"—he grinned up at her—"that boy changed your view a lot, didn't he?"

"You mean to say you were here?" She flashed him a look of annoyance.

"Was I here? Sister, we was all here! The whole works was here!"

She reflected, the upper lip drawn down.

"Who cares?" she retorted. She turned away, then paused, debating with herself. "You—you needn't let it go any farther, but I've got to tell someone. It was a surprise. I was never so bumped in my whole life."

The private grinned again.

"Lady, that lad just naturally put a comether on you."

She considered this, then shook her head.

"No, it was more like—we must have put one on each other. It—it was fierce!"

"Happy days!" cheered the private. She lighted him with the effulgence of a knowing smile.

"Thanks a lot," she said.

The war went on.

In her next letter Winona Penniman wrote: "We moved up to a station nearer the front last Tuesday. I spent a night with Patricia Whipple. The child has come through it all wonderfully so far. A month ago she was down and out; now she can't get enough work to do. Says the war bores her stiff. She means to stick it through, but all her talk is of going home. By the way, she told me she had a little visit with Wilbur Cowan the other day. She says she never saw him looking better."

CHAPTER XIX

TWO lines of helmeted men went over the crest of the hill. Private Cowan was no longer conscious of aching feet and leaden legs or of the burden that bowed his shoulders. There was a pounding in his ears, and in his mind a verse of Scripture that had lingered inexplicably there since their last billet at Comprey. His corporal, late a theological student, had read and expounded bits of the Bible to such as would listen. Forsaking beaten paths, he had one day explored Revelations. He had explained the giving unto seven angels of seven golden vials of the wrath of God, but later came upon a verse that gave him pause:

"And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars."

It seemed that everything in Revelations had a hidden meaning, and the expert found this obscure. There had been artless speculation among the listeners. A private with dice had professed to solve the riddle of the Number Seven, and had even alleged that twelve might be easier to throw if one kept repeating the verse, but this by his fellows was held to be rank superstition. No really acceptable exposition had been offered of the woman clothed with the sun, and under her feet the moon, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.

Wilbur Cowan, marching up the hill, now sounded the words to himself; they went with that pounding in his ears. At last he knew what they meant—a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and under her feet the moon. Over and over he chanted the words.

So much was plain to him. But how had it come about? They had looked, then enveloped each other, not thinking,

blindly groping. They had been out of themselves, not on guard, not held by a thousand bands of old habit that back in Newbern would have restrained them. Lacking these, they had rushed to that wild contact like two charged clouds, and everything was changed by that moment's surrender to some force beyond their relaxed wills. Something between them had not been, now it was; something compelling; something that had, for its victory, needed only that they confront each other, not considering, not resisting, biddable.

In his arms she had cried: "But how did we know—how did we know?"

He had found no answer. Holding her fiercely as he did, it seemed enough that they did know. He had surrendered, but could not reason—was even incurious.

At the last she had said: "But if it shouldn't be true; if it's only because we're both worn down and saw someone from home. Suppose it's mere——"

She had broken off to thump his shoulder in reassurance, to cling more abjectly. It was then she had wept, shakingly, in a vast impatience with herself for trying to reason.

"It is true! It is true—it's true, it's true!" she had told him with piteous vehemence, then wilted again to his support, one hand stroking his dusty cheek.

When the command had come down the line she seemed about to fall, but braced herself with new strength from some hidden source. When he released her she stood erect, regarding him with something of the twisted, humorous quirk about her lips that for an instant brought her back to him as the little girl of long ago. Not until then had he been able to picture her as Patricia Whipple. Then he saw. Her smile became surer.

"You've gone and spoiled the whole war for me!" she called to him.

The war, too, had been spoiled for Private Cowan. He was unable to keep his mind on it. Of the Second Battle of the Marne he was to remember little worth telling.

Two nights later they came to rest in the woods back of St. Eugene, in the little valley of the Surmelin, that gateway to Paris from the farthest point of the second German drive. It was a valley shining with the gold of little wheat fields, crimson-specked with poppies. It recalled to Private Cowan merely the farmland rolling away from that old house of red brick where he had gone one day with Sharon Whipple—yesterday it might have been. Even the winding creek—though the French called theirs a river—was like the other creek, its course marked by a tangle of shrubs and small growths; and the sides of the valley were flanked familiarly with stony ridges sparsely covered with second-growth timber. Newbern, he kept thinking, would lie four miles beyond that longest ridge, and down that yellow road Sharon Whipple might soon be driving his creaking, weathered buggy and the gaunt roan. The buggy would sag to one side and Sharon would be sitting "slaunchwise," as he called it. Over the ridge, at Newbern's edge, would be the bony little girl who was so funny and willful.

They moved forward to the south bank of the Marne. Beyond that fifty-yard stream lay the enemy, reported now to be stacking up drive impedimenta. The reports bored Private Cowan. He wished they would hurry the thing through. He had other matters in hand. A woman clothed with the sun, and under her feet the moon, and upon her head a crown of—he could not make the crown of stars seem right. She was crowned with a nurse's cap, rusty hair showing beneath, and below this her wan, wistful, eager face, the eyes half shutting in vain attempts to reason. The face would be drawn by some inner torment; then its tortured lines melt to a smile of sure conviction. But she was clothed with the sun, and the moon was under her feet. So much he could make seem true.

The dark of a certain night fell on the waiting regiment. Crickets sounded their note, a few silent birds winged furtively overhead. Rolling kitchens brought up the one hot meal of the day, to be taken to the front by carrying parties.

Company commanders made a last reconnaissance of their positions. For Private Cowan it was a moment of double waiting. Waiting for battle was now secondary. In a tiny slit trench on the forward edge of a railway embankment Private Brennon remarked upon the locomotion of the foreign frog.

"Will you look at 'em walk!" said Spike. "Just like an animal! Don't they ever learn to hop like regular gorfs?"

Said Private Cowan: "I suppose you saw that girl back there the other day?"

"Me and the regiment," said Spike, and chewed gum discreetly.

"She's a girl from back home. Funny! I'd never taken much notice of her before."

"You took a-plenty back there. You've raised your average awful high. I'll say it!"

"I hardly knew what I was doing."

"Didn't you? We did!"

"Since then sometimes I forget what we're here for."

"Don't worry, kid! You'll be told."

"It's funny how things happen that you never expected, but afterward you see it was natural as anything."

At midnight the quiet sky split redly asunder. German guns began to feel a way to Paris. The earth rocked in a gentle rhythm under a rain of shells. Shrapnel and gas lent vivacity to the assault. Guns to their utmost reach swept the little valley like a Titan's sickle. Private Cowan nestled his cheek against the earthen side of his little slit trench and tried to remember what she had worn that last night in Newbern. Something glistening, warm in colour, like ripe fruit; and a rusty braid bound her head. She had watched, doubtfully, to see if people were not impatient at her talk. A rattlepate, old Sharon called her. She was something else now; some curious sort of woman, older, not afraid. She wouldn't care any more if people were impatient.

At four o'clock of that morning the bombardment of the

front line gave way to a rolling barrage. Close behind this, hugging it, as the men said, came gray waves of the enemy. It was quieter after the barrage had passed: only the tack-tack of machine guns and the clash of meeting bayonets.

"Going to have some rough stuff," said Private Brennon.

For a long time then Private Cowan was so engrossed with the routine of his present loose trade that the name of Whipple seemed to have no room in his mind. For four hours he had held a cold rifle and thought. Now the gun was hot, its bayonet wet, and he thought not at all. When it was over he was one of fifty-two men left of his company that had numbered two hundred and fifty-one. But his own uniform would still be clean of wound chevrons.

Two divisions of German shock troops had broken against a regiment of American fighting men.

"I don't like fighting any more," said Private Cowan.

"Pushed 'em across the crick," said Private Brennon. "Now we chase 'em!"

So they joined the chase and fought again at Jaulgonne, where it rained for three days and nights, and Private Cowan considered his life in danger because he caught cold; it might develop into pneumonia. He didn't want to get sick and die—not now. It had not, of late, occurred to him that he would be in any danger save from sickness. But he threw off the menacing cold and was fit for the big battle at Fismes, stubbornly pronounced "Fissims" by Private Brennon, after repeated corrections.

Private Cowan thought now, when not actually engaged at his loose trade, of his brother. He wished the boy could have been with him. He would have learned something. He would have learned that you feel differently about a country if once you fight for it. His country had been only a name; he had merely ached to fight. Now he hated fighting; words could never tell how he loathed it; but his country had become more than a name. He would fight again for that. He wished Merle could have had this new feeling about his country.

It was before Fismes, being out where he had no call to be, and after winning a finish fight with a strangely staring spectacled foe, that he stumbled across the inert form of Private Brennon, who must also have gone where he had no call to go. He leaned over him. Spike's mask was broken, but half adjusted. He shouldered the burden, grunting as he did so, angered by the weight of it. He was irritated, too, by men who were firing at him, but his greater resentment was for Spike's unreasonable mass.

"You son of a gun—hog fat! Overweight, that's what you are! You'll never make a hundred and thirty-three again, not you! Gee, gosh, a light heavyweight, that's what you are!"

He complained to the unhearing Spike all the way back to a dressing station, though twice refusing help to carry his load.

"Mustard gas," said the surgeon.

He was back there when Spike on his stretcher came violently to life.

"What a dark night!" said Spike between two of the spasms that wrenched him. "Can't see your hand before your face!"

"Say, you're hog fat!" grumbled Private Cowan. "You weigh a ton!"

"It's dark, but it feels light—it's warm."

Private Cowan leaned to shield the sun from Spike's garbled face.

"Sure it's dark!" said he.

"Can't see your hand before your face!"

Spike was holding up a hand, thumb and fingers widely spread, moving it before his sightless eyes.

"You got to go back. You're too fat to be up here."

He rested his hand on Spike's forehead but withdrew it quickly when Spike winced.

He went on with the war; and the war went on.

"You would never guess," wrote Winona, "who was brought to this base hospital last week. It was the Mr.

Brennon I wrote you of, Mr. Edward Brennon, the friend of Wilbur's who went with him from Newbern. He is blind from gas, poor thing! Our head surgeon knew him. It seems he is one of the prettiest lightweights the head surgeon ever saw in action, a two-handed fighter with a good right and a good left. These are terms used in the sport of boxing.

"Of course he knows he is blind, but at first he thought he was only in the dark. Wilbur had told him of me. The most curious misunderstanding—he is positive he once saw me at home. Says I am the prettiest thing he ever looked at, and don't I remember coming into the post office one day in a white dress and white shoes and a blue parasol and getting some mail and going out to a motor where some people waited for me? The foolish thing insists I have blue eyes and light brown hair and I was smiling when I looked at him in passing; not smiling at him, of course, but from something the people in the car had said; and I had one glove off and carried the other with the blue sunshade. And I think he means a girl from Rochester that visited the Hendricks, those mill people, summer before last. She was pretty enough, in a girlish way, but not at all my type. But I can't convince Edward it was not I he saw. I have given up trying. What harm in letting him think so? He says, anyway, he would know I am beautiful, because he can feel it even if I come into the room. Did you ever hear such talk? But I am looking a lot better, in spite of all I have been through.

"I had a week in Paris last month, and bought some clothes, a real Paris dress and things. You would not know me in the new outfit. The skirt is of rather a daring shortness, but such is the mode now, and I am told it becomes me. Poor Edward, he is so patient, except for spells when he seems to go mad with realizing his plight. He is still a man. His expression is forceful. He doesn't smoke, and warns me against it, though the few cigarettes I allow myself are a precious relief. But I have promised him to give up the

habit when the war is over. He is a strong man, but helpless. He still believes I am the pretty thing he saw in the post office. The skirt is pleated, light summer stuff, and falls in a straight line. Of course I have the shoes and stockings that go with it."

"There!" exploded the judge. "Taking up with prize fighters—traipsing round in a regular French dress, looking like something she's not supposed to be!"

"Lysander!" rebuked his wife hotly.

"He tells me lots about Wilbur," continued the letter. "He hints that the boy is in love, but will say nothing definite. Men are so close-mouthed. I hope our boy doesn't marry some little French anybody. His face is not exactly pleasant to look upon for the time being, but he has a very winning personality."

"Who's she mean that for?" demanded the Judge truculently. "The Cowan boy?"

CHAPTER XX

ON A day late in June of 1919 Wilbur Cowan dropped off the noon train that paused at Newbern Center. He carried the wicker suitcase he had taken away, and wore the same clothes. He had the casual, incurious look of one who had been for a little trip down the line. No one about the station heeded him, nor did he notice any one he knew. There was a new assemblage of station loafers, and none of these recognized him. Suitcase in hand, his soft hat pulled well down, he walked quickly round the crowd and took a roundabout way through quiet streets to the Penniman place.

The town to his eye had shrunk; buildings were not so high as he remembered them, wide spaces narrower, streets shorter, less thronged. On his way he met old Mr. Dodwell, muffled about the throat, though the day was hot, walking feebly, planting a stout cane before him. Mr. Dodwell passed blinking eyes over him, went on, then turned to call back.

"Ain't that Wilbur Cowan? How de do, Wilbur? Ain't you been away?"

"For a little while," answered Wilbur. "Thought I hadn't seen you for some time. Hot as blazes, ain't it?"

He came to the Penniman place at the rear. The vegetable garden, lying between the red barn and the white house, was as he had known it, uncared for, sad, discouraged. The judge's health could be no better. On bare earth at the corner of the woodshed Frank, the dog, slumbered fitfully in the shade. He merely grumbled, rising to change his posture, when greeted. Feebly he sniffed the newcomer. It could be seen that his memory was stirred, but his eyes

told him nothing; he had a complaining air of saying one met so many people. It was beyond one to place them all. He whimpered when his ears were rubbed, seeming to recall a familiar touch. Then with a deep sigh he fell asleep once more. His master took up the suitcase and gained, without further encounters, the little room in the side-yard house. Yet he did not linger here. He kept seeing a small, barefoot boy who rummaged in a treasure box labelled "Cake." This boy made him uncomfortable. He went round to the front of the other house. On the porch, behind the morning-glory vine, Judge Penniman in his wicker chair languidly fanned himself, studying a thermometer held in his other hand. He glanced up sharply.

"Well, come back, did you?"

"Yes, sir," said Wilbur, and sat on the top step to fan himself with his hat. "Warm, isn't it?"

The judge brightened.

"Warm? Warm ain't any name for it! We been having a hot spell nobody remembers the like of, man nor boy, for twenty years. Why, day before yeserday—say, I wish you'd been here! Talk about suffering! I was having one of my bad days, and the least little thing I'd do I'd be panting like a tuckered hound. Say, how was the war?"

"Oh, so-so," answered the returned private.

"You tell it well. Seems to me if I'd been off skyhootin' round in foreign lands—say, how about them French women? Pretty bold lot, I guess, if you can believe all you——"

The parrot in its cage at the end of the porch climbed to a perch with beak and claw.

"Flapdoodle, Flapdoodle, Flapdoodle!" it screeched. The judge glared murderously at it.

"Wilbur Cowan, you bad, bad, bad child—not to let us know!" Mrs. Penniman threw back the screen door and rushed to embrace him. "You regular fighting so-and-so!" she sobbed.

"Where'd you get that talk?" he demanded.

Mrs. Penniman wiped her eyes with a dish towel suspended from one arm.

"Oh, we heard all about you!"

She was warm, and shed gracious aromas. The returned one sniffed these.

"It's chops," he said—"and—and hot biscuits."

"And radishes from the garden, and buttermilk and clover honey and raspberries, and—let me see—"

"Let's go!" said the soldier.

"Then you can tell us all about that war," said the invalid as with groans he raised his bulk from the wicker chair.

"What war?" asked Wilbur.

He spent the afternoon in the little room, where he would glance up to find the small, barefoot boy staring at him in wonder; and out in the Penniman front yard, where the summer flowers bloomed. These surroundings presented every assurance of safety, yet his restless, wide-sweeping gaze was full of caution, especially after the aëroplane went over. At the first ominous note of its droning he had broken for cover. After that, in spite of himself, he would be glancing uneasily at the Plummer place across the road. This was fronted by a hedge of cypress—ideal machine-gun cover. But not once during the long afternoon was he shot at. He brought out and repaired the lawn mower, oiled its rusted parts and ran it gayly over the grass. At suppertime, when Dave Cowan came, he was wetting the shorn sward with spray from a hose.

"Back?" said Dave. peering as at a bit of the far cosmos flung in his way.

"Back," said his son.

They shook hands.

"You haven't changed any," said Wilbur, scanning Dave's placid face under the straw hat and following the lines of his spare figure down to the vestiges of a once noble pair of shoes.

"You only been away two years," said Dave. "I wouldn't change much in that time. That's the way of the mind,

though. We always forget how slowly evolution works its wonders. Anyhow, you know what they say in our trade—when a printer dies he turns into a white mule. I'm no white mule yet. You've changed, though."

"I didn't know it."

"Face harder—about ten years older. Kind of set and sour looking. Ever laugh any more?"

"Of course I laugh."

"You don't look it. Never forget how to laugh. It's a life-saver. Laugh even at wars and killings. Human life in each of us isn't much. It's like that stream you're spreading over the ground. The drops fall back to earth, but the main stream is constant. That's all the life force cares about—the main stream. Doesn't care about the drops; a few more or less here and there make no difference."

"Yes, sir," said Wilbur.

Dave Cowan scanned the front of the house. The judge was not in sight. He went softly to lean above the parrot's cage and in low, wheedling tones, uttered words to it.

"Flapdoodle, Flapdoodle, Flapdoodle!" screeched the parrot in return, and laughed harshly. The bird was a master of sarcastic inflection.

Dave came back looking pleased and proud.

"Almost human," he declared. "Kept back a few million years by accident—our little feathered brother." He gestured toward the house. "Old Flapdoodle, in there, he's a rabid red these days. Got tired of being a patriot. Worked hard for a year trying to prove that Vielhaber was a German spy, flapping his curtain at night to the German Foreign Office. But no one paid any attention to him except a few other flapdoodles, so then he began to read your brother's precious words, and now he's a violent comrade. Fact! expecting any day that the workers will take things over and he'll come into money—money the interests have kept him out of. He kind of licks his chops when he talks about it. Never heard him talk about his wife's share, though. Say, that brother of yours is making a plumb fool of himself!"

"He didn't understand."

"No—and he doesn't yet."

"Where is he now?"

"Oh"—Dave circled a weary hand to the zenith—"off somewhere holy-rolling. Gets his name in the papers—young poet radical that abandoned life of luxury to starve with toiling comrades. Say, do you know what a toiling comrade gets per day now? No matter. Your brother hasn't toiled any. Makes red-hot speeches. That Whipple bunch reared at last and shut off his magazine money, so he said he couldn't take another cent wrung from the anguished sweat of serfs. But it ain't his hands he toils with, and he ain't a real one, either. Plenty of real ones in his bunch that would stand the gaff, but not him. He's a shine. Of course they're useful, these reds. Keep things stirred up—human yeast cakes, only they get to thinking they're the dough, too. That brother of yours knows all the lines; says 'em hot, too, but that's only so he'll get more notice. Say, tell us about the war.

"It was an awful big one," said his son.

Soon after a novel breakfast the following morning—in that it was late and leisurely and he ate from a chair at a table—he heard the squealing brakes of a motor car and saw one brought to a difficult stop at the Penniman gate. Sharon Whipple, the driver, turned to look back at the machine indignantly, as if it had misbehaved. Wilbur Cowan met him at the gate.

It became Sharon's pretense that he was not hugging the boy, merely feeling the muscles in his shoulders and back to see if he were as good a lightweight as ever. He pounded and thumped and punched and even made as if to wrestle with the returned soldier, laughing awkwardly through it; but his florid face had paled with the excitement.

"I knew you'd come back! Old Sammy Dodwell happened to mention he'd seen you; said he hadn't noticed you before for most a month, he thought. But I knew you was

coming, all right! Time and time again I told people you would. Told every one that. I bet you had some narrow escapes, didn't you now?"

Wilbur Cowan considered.

"Well, I had a pretty bad cold in the Argonne."

"I want to know!" said Sharon, much concerned. He pranced heavy-footedly before the other, thumping his chest. "Well, I bet you threw it off! A hard cold ain't any joke. But look here, come on for a ride!"

They entered the car and Sharon drove. But he continued to bubble with questions, to turn his head and gesture with one hand or the other. The passenger applied imaginary brakes as they missed a motor truck.

"Better let me take that," he suggested, and they changed seats.

"Out to the Home Farm," directed Sharon. "You ain't altered a mite," he went on. "Little more peaked, mebbe—kind of more mature or judgmatical or whatever you call it. Well, go on—tell about the war."

But there proved to be little to tell, and Sharon gradually wearied from the effort of evoking this little. Yes, there had been fights. Big ones, lots of noise, you bet! The food was all right. The Germans were good fighters. No; he had not been wounded; yes, that was strange. The French were good fighters. The British were good fighters. They were all good fighters.

"But didn't you have any close mix-ups at all?" persisted Sharon.

"Oh, now and then; sometimes you couldn't get out of it."

"Well, my shining stars! Can't you tell a fellow?"

"Oh, it wasn't much! You'd be out at night, maybe, and you'd meet one, and you'd trade a few punches, and then you'd tangle."

"And you'd leave him there, eh?"

"Oh, sometimes!"

"Who did win the war, anyway?" Sharon was a little irritated by this reticence.

The other grinned.

"The British say they won it, and the last I heard the French said it was God Almighty. Take your choice. Of course you did hear other gossip going round—you know how things get started."

Sharon grunted.

"I should think as much. Great prunes and apricots! I should think there would of been talk going round! Anyway, it was you boys that stopped the fight. I guess they'd admit that much—small-towners like you that was ready to fight for their country. Dear me, Suz! I should think as much!"

On the crest of a hill overlooking a wide sweep of valley farmland the driver stopped the car in shade and scanned the fields of grain where the green was already fading.

"There's the Home Farm," said Sharon. "High mighty! Some change since my grandad came in here and fit the Injins and catamounts off it. I wonder what he'd say if he could hear what I'm paying for farm help right now—and hard to get at that. I don't know how I've managed. See that mower going down there in the south forty? Well, the best man I've had for two years is cutting that patch of timothy. Who do you guess? It's my girl, Juliana. She not only took charge for me, but she jumped in herself and did two men's work.

"Funny girl, that one. So quiet all these years, never saying much, never letting out. But she let out when the men went. I guess lots have been like her. You can see a woman doing anything nowadays. Why, they got a woman burglar over to the county seat the other night! And I just read the speech of a silly-softy of a congressman telling why they shouldn't have the vote. Hell! Excuse me for cursing so."

Unconsciously Wilbur had been following with his eyes the course of the willow-bordered creek. He half expected to hear the crisp little tacking of machine guns from its shelter, and he uneasily scanned the wood at his left. It was the valley of the Surmelin, and yonder was the Marne.

"I keep thinking I'll be shot at," he explained.

"You won't be. Safe as a church here—just like being in God's pocket. Say, don't that house look good to you?" He cocked a thumb toward the dwelling of the Home Farm in a flat space beyond the creek. It was the house of dull red brick, broad, low, square fronted, with many windows, the house in a green setting to which they had gone so many years before. Heat waves made it shimmer.

"Yes, it looks good," conceded Wilbur.

"Then listen, young man! You're to live there. It'll be your headquarters. You're going to manage the four other farms from there, and give me a chance to be seventy-three years old next Tuesday without a thing on my mind. You ain't a farmer, but you're educated; you can learn anything after you've seen it done; and farming is mostly common sense and machinery nowadays. So that's where you'll be, understand? No more dubbing round doing this and that, printing office one day, garage the next, and nothing much the next. You're going to settle down and take up your future, see?"

"Well, if you think I can."

"I do! You're an enlightened young man. What I can't tell you Juliana can. I got a dozen tractors out of commission right now. Couldn't get any one to put 'em in shape. None of them dissipated noblemen round the Mansion garage would look at a common tractor. You'll start on them. You're fixed—don't tell me no!"

"Yes, sir," said Wilbur.

"You done your bit in a fighting war; now you'll serve in a peaceful one. I don't know what the good Lord intends to come out of all this rumpus, but I do know the world's going to need food. We'll raise it."

"Yes, sir."

Sharon glanced shrewdly at him sidewise.

"You're a better Whipple than any one else of your name ever got to be."

"He didn't understand; he was misled or something."

"Or something," echoed Sharon. "Listen! There's one

little job you got to do before you hole up out here. You heard about him, of course—the worry he's been to poor Harvey and the rest. Well, he's down there in New York still acting squamishy. I want you should go down and put the fear of God into him."

"I understand he's mixed up with a lot of reds down there."

"Red! Him? Humph!" Sharon here named an equally well-known primary colour—not red. Wilbur protested.

"You don't get him," persisted the old man. "Listen, now! He cast off the family like your father said he would. Couldn't accept another cent of Whipple money. Going to work with his bare hands. Dressed up for it like a hunter in one of these powder advertisements. All he needed was a shotgun and a setter dog with his tail up. And everybody in the house worried he'd starve to death. Of course no one thought he'd work—that was one of his threats they didn't take seriously. But they promised to sit tight, each and all, and bring him to time the sooner.

"Well, he didn't come to time. We learned he was getting money from some place. He still had it. So I begun to get my suspicions up. Last night I got the bunch together, Gid and Harvey D. and Ella and Juliana, and I taxed 'em with duplicity, and every last one of 'em was guilty as paint —every goshed last one! Every one sending him fat checks unbeknownst to the others. Even Juliana! I never did suspect her. 'I did it because it's all a romance to him,' says she. 'I wanted him to go his way, whatever it was, and find it bright.'

"Wha'd you think of that from a girl of forty-eight or so that can tinker a mowing machine as good as you can? I ask you! Of course I'd suspected the rest. A set of mushheads. Maybe they didn't look shamed when I exposed 'em! Each one had pictured the poor boy down there alone, undergoing hardship with his toiling workers or whatever you call 'em, and, of course, I thought so myself."

"How much did you send him?" demanded Wilbur, suddenly.

"Not half as much as the others," returned Sharon in indignant triumph. "If they'd just set tight like they promised and let me do the little I done——"

"You were going to sit tight, too, weren't you?"

"Well, of course, that was different. Of course I was willing to shell out a few dollars now and then if he was going to be up against it for a square meal. After all, he was Whipple by name. Of course he ain't got Whipple stuff in him. That young man's talk always did have kind of a nutty flavour. You come right down to it, he ain't a Whipple in hide nor hair. Why, say, he ain't even two and seventy-five-hundredths per cent. Whipple!"

Sharon had cunningly gone away from his own failure to sit tight. He was proving flexible-minded here, as on the links.

They were silent, looking out over the spread of Home Farm. The red house still shimmered in the heat waves. The tall trees about it hung motionless. The click of the reaper in the south forty sounded like a distant locust.

"Put the fear of God into him," said Sharon at last. "Let him know them checks have gosh all truly stopped."

"Yes, sir," said Wilbur.

"Now drive on and we'll look the house over. The last tenant let it run down. But I'll fix it right for you. Why, like as not you'll be having a missis and young ones of your own there some day."

"I might; you can't tell."

"Well, I wish they was going to be Whipple stock. Ours is running down. I don't look for any prize-winners from your brother; he'll likely marry that widow, or something, that wants to save America like Russia has been. And Juliana, I guess she wasn't ever frivolous enough for marriage. And that Pat—she'll pick out one of them boys with a head like a seal, that knows all the new dances and what fork to use. Trust her! Not that she didn't show Whipple stuff over there. But she's a rattlepate in peacetime."

"Yes, sir," said Wilbur.

He left a train at the Grand Central Station in New York early the following evening. He had the address of Merle's apartment on lower Fifth Avenue, and made his way there on foot through streets crowded with the war's backwash. Men in uniform were plentiful, and he was many times hailed by them. Though out of uniform himself, they seemed to identify him with ease. Something in his walk, the slant of his shoulders, and the lean, browned, watchful face—the eyes set for wider horizons than a mere street—served to mark him as one of them.

The apartment of Merle proved to be in the first block above Washington Square. While he scanned doors for the number he was seized and turned about by a playful creature in uniform.

"Well, Buck Cowan, you old son of a gun!"

"Gee, gosh, Stevie! How's the boy?"

They shook hands, moving to the curb where they could talk.

"What's the idea?" demanded ex-Private Cowan. "Why this dead part of town for so many of the boys?"

Service men were constantly sauntering by them or chatting in little groups at the curb.

"She's dead, right now," Steve told him, "but she'll wake up pronto. Listen, Buck, we got the tip! A lot of them fur-faced boys that hurl the merry bombs are goin' to pull off a red-flag sashay up the Avenoo. Get it? Goin' to set America free!"

"I get it!" said Wilbur.

"Dirty work at the crossroads," added Steve.

"Say, Steve, hold it for twenty minutes, can't you? I got to see a man down here. Be good; don't hurt any one till I get back."

"Do my best," said Steve, "but they're down there in the Square now stackin' up drive impedimenta and such, red banners, and so forth, tuning up to warble the hymn to free Russia. Hurry if you want to join out with us!"

"I'll do that little thing, Steve. See you again." He

passed on, making a way through the jostling throng of soldiers and civilians. "Just my luck," he muttered. "I hope the kid isn't in." Never before had he thought of his brother as "the kid."

He passed presently through swinging glass doors, and in a hallway was told by a profusely buttoned youth in spectacles that Mr. Whipple was out. It was not known when he would be in. His movements were uncertain.

"He might be in or he might be out," said the boy.

He was back in the street, edging through the crowd, his head up, searching for the eager face of Steve Kennedy, late his sergeant. Halfway up the next block he found him pausing to roll a cigarette. Steve was a scant five feet, and he was telling a private who was a scant six feet that there would be dirty work at the crossroads—when the fur-faces started.

"We're too far away," suggested Wilbur. "If they start from the Square they'll be mussed up before they get here. You can't expect people farther down to save 'em just for you. Where's your tactics, Steve?"

They worked slowly back down the Avenue. It was nine o'clock now, and the street was fairly free of vehicles. The night was clear and the street lights brought alert, lean profiles into sharp relief, faces of men in uniform sauntering carelessly or chatting in little groups at the curb. A few unseeing policemen, also sauntering carelessly, were to be observed.

"Heard a fur-face speak last night," said Steve. "It's a long story, mates, but it seems this is one rotten Government and everybody knows it but a few cops. If someone would only call off the cops and let the fur-faces run it we might have a regular country."

From the Square singing was now heard.

"Oh, boy!" murmured the tall private, dreamily; "am I glad I'm here?" Stretching a long neck to peer toward the Square, he called in warm, urgent tones: "Oh, come on, you reds—come on, red!"

They came on. Out from the Square issued a valiant double line of marchers, men and women, their voices raised

in the Internationale. At their head, bearing aloft a scarlet banner of protest, strode a commanding figure in corduroys, head up, his feet stepping a martial pace.

"I choose that general," said the tall private, and licked his lips.

"Not if I get him first," shouted Steve, and sprang from the walk into the roadway.

But ex-Private Cowan was ahead of them both. He had not waited for speech. A crowd from each side of the Avenue had surged into the roadway to greet the procession. The banner bearer was seen to hesitate, to lose step, but was urged from the rear by other banner bearers. He came on again. Once more he stepped martially. The Internationale swelled in volume. The crowd, instead of opening a way, condensed more solidly about the advance. There were jeers and shoving. The head of the line again wavered. Wilbur Cowan had jostled a way toward this leader. He lost no time in going into action. But the pushing crowd impaired his aim, and it was only a glancing blow that met the jaw of the corduroyed standard bearer.

The standard toppled forward from his grasp, and its late bearer turned quickly aside. As he turned Wilbur Cowan reached forward to close a hand about the corduroy collar. Then he pulled. The standard bearer came back easily to a sitting posture on the asphalt. The crowd was close in, noisily depriving other bearers of their standards. The Internationale had become blurred and discordant, like a bad phonograph record. The parade still came to break and flow about the obstruction.

Wilbur Cowan jerked his prize up and whirled him about. He contemplated further atrocities. But the pallid face of his brother was now revealed to him.

"Look out there!" he warned the crowd, and a way was opened.

He drew back on the corduroy collar, then sent it forward with a mighty shove. His captive shot through the opening, fell again to the pavement, but was up and off before those

nearest him could devise further entertainment. Among other accomplishments Merle had been noted in college for his swiftness of foot. He ran well, heading for the north, skillfully avoiding those on the outskirts of the crowd who would have tackled him. Wilbur Cowan watched him out of sight, beyond the area of combat. Then he worked his own way from it and stood to watch the further disintegration of the now leaderless parade.

The tumult died, the crowd melted away. Policemen became officious. From areaways up and down the Avenue forms emerged furtively, walked discreetly to corners and skurried down side streets. Here and there a crimson banner flecked the asphalt. Steve and the tall private issued from the last scrimmage, breathing hard.

"Nothing to it!" said the tall private. "Only I skun my knuckles."

"I was aimin' a wallop at that general," complained Steve, "but something blew him right out of my hand. Come on up to Madison Avenoo. I heard they was goin' to save America up there, too."

"Can't," said Wilbur. "Got to see a man."

"Well, so long, Buck!"

He waved to them as they joined the northward moving crowd.

"Gee, gosh!" he said.

"No, sir; Mr. Whipple hasn't come in yet. He just sent word he wouldn't be back at all to-night," said the spectacled hall boy. But his manner was so little ingenuous that once again the hand of Wilbur Cowan closed itself eloquently about the collar of a jacket.

"Get into that elevator and let me out at his floor."

"You let me alone!" said the hall boy. "I was going to."

He knocked a third time before he could hear a faint call. He opened the door. Beyond a dim entrance hall the light fell upon his brother seated at a desk, frowning intently at work before him. The visible half of him was no longer in cordu-

roy. It was incased in a smoking jacket of velvet, and his neck was conventionally clad in collar and cravat. The latter had been hastily tied.

"Why, Wilbur, old man!" cried Merle in pleased surprise. He half rose from the desk, revealing that below the waist he was still corduroy or proletarian. Along his left jaw was a contusion as from a glancing blow. He was still breathing harder than most men do who spend quiet evenings at desks.

Wilbur advanced into the room, but paused before reaching the desk. It was an invitingly furnished room of cushioned couches, paintings, tapestries, soft chairs, warmly toned rugs. The desk at which Merle toiled was ornate and shining. Ex-Private Cowan felt a sudden revulsion. He was back, knee-deep in trench bilge, tortured in all his being, looking at death from behind a sandbag. Vividly he recalled why he had endured that torture.

"You're all out of condition," he announced in even tones to Merle. "A little sprint like that shouldn't get your wind."

Merle's look of sunny welcome faded to one of chagrin. He fell back in his chair. He was annoyed.

"You saw that disgraceful outbreak, then?"

"I was in luck to-night."

"Did you see that drunken rowdy strike at me, and then try to get me down where he and those other brutes could kick me?"

Wilbur's stare was cool. He was feeling the icy muck about his numbed legs.

"I was the one that struck at you. Too many elbows in the way and I flubbed it." He noted his brother start and stiffen in his chair. "And I didn't try to get you down. When I saw it was you I got you up and shot you out where you could run—if you wanted to. And I wasn't drunk, and I'm not a rowdy."

Merle gazed with horror upon the apparently uncontrite fratricide. Twice he essayed to speak before he found the words.

"Do you think that was a brave thing to do?"

"No—but useful. I've been brave a lot of times where it didn't do as much good as that."

"Useful!" breathed Merle, scathingly. "Useful to brutalize a lot of brave souls who merely sought——" he broke off with a new sense of outrage. "And not a policeman there to do his duty!" he finished resentfully.

Wilbur Cowan sat in a carven chair near a corner of the beautiful desk, hitching it forward to rest his arms on the desk's top. He was newly appraising this white-faced brother.

"Whining!" he suddenly snapped. "Get up and boast that you're outlaws, going to keel the Government off its pins. Then you get the gaff, and the first thing you do is whine for help from that same Government! You say it's rotten, but you expect it to watch over you while you knock it down. If you're going to be an outlaw, take an outlaw's chance. Don't squeal when you get caught. You say the rules are rotten, then you fall back on them. What kind of sportsmanship is that?"

Wearily but with a tolerant smile Merle pushed back the fallen lock with one white hand.

"What could you understand of all this?" he asked, gently. "We merely claim the right of free speech."

"And use it to tell other people to upset the Government! That crowd to-night did what you tell your people to do—went against the rules. But you can't take your own medicine. A fine bunch of spoiled children you are! Been spoiled by too easy a Government at that!" He broke off to study Merle again. "You're pasty, out of condition," he repeated, inconsequently.

Again his brother's intolerant smile.

"You have all the cant of the reactionary," he retorted, again gently. "It's the spirit of intolerance one finds everywhere. You can't expect one of my——" he hesitated, showing a slight impatience. "I've been too long where they are thinking," he said.

"Aren't you people intolerant? You want to break all

the rules, and those same rules have made us a pretty good big country."

"Ah, yes, a big country—big! We can always boast of our size, can't we? I dare say you believe its bigness is a sign of our merit." Merle had recovered his poise. He was at home in satire. "Besides, I've broken no rules, as you call them."

"Oh, I'll bet you haven't! You'd be careful not to. I see that much. But you try to get smaller children to. I'd have more patience with you if you'd taken a chance yourself."

"Patience with me—you?" Merle relished this. His laugh was sincere. "You—would have more patience with—me!" But his irony went for little with a man still at the front.

"Sure! If only you'd smashed a few rules yourself. Take that girl and her partner they arrested the other day. They don't whine. They're behind the bars, but still cussing the Government. You've got to respect fighters like that Liebknecht the Germans killed, and that Rosa What's-Her-Name. They were game. But you people, you try to put on all their airs without taking their chances. That's why you make me so tired—always keeping your martyr's halo polished and handy where you can slip it out of a pocket when you get just what you've been asking for."

"You're not too subtle, are you? But then one could hardly expect subtlety——"

Merle was again almost annoyed.

"Subtle be jiggered! Do you think you people are subtle? About as subtle as a ton of bricks. All your talk in that magazine about this being a land of the dollar, no ideals, no spirituality, a land of money-grubbers—all that other stuff! Say, I want to tell you this is the least money-grubbing land there is! You people would know that if you had any subtlety. Maybe you did know it. We went into that scrap for an ideal, and we're the only country that did. France might have gone for an ideal, but France had to fight, anyway.

"England? Do you think England went in only to save poor little Belgium? She herself was the next dish on the bill of fare. But we went in out of general damfoolishness—for an ideal—this country you said didn't have any. We don't care about money—less than any of those people. Watch a Frenchman count his coppers, or an Englishman that carries his in a change purse and talks about pounds but really thinks in shillings. We carry our money loose and throw it away.

"If this country had been what your sniveling little magazine called it we'd never have gone into that fight. You're not even subtle enough to know that much. We knew it would cost like hell, but we knew it was a great thing to do. Not another nation on earth would have gone in for that reason. That's the trouble with you poor little shut-ins; you decide the country hasn't any ideals because someone runs a stockyard out in Chicago or a foundry in Pittsburgh. God help you people if you'd had your way about the war! The Germans would be taking that nonsense out of you by this time. And to think you had me kind of ashamed when I went over! I thought you knew something then." He concluded on a note almost plaintive.

Merle had grown visibly impatient.

"My dear fellow, really! Your point of view is interesting enough, even if all too common. You are true to type, but so crude a type—so crude!"

"Sure, I'm crude! The country itself is crude, I guess. But it takes a crude country to have ideals—ideals with guts. Your type isn't crude, I suppose, but it hasn't any ideals, either."

"No ideals! No ideals! Ah, but that's the best thing you've said!"

He laughed masterfully, waving aside the monstrous accusation.

"Well, maybe it is the best thing I've said. You haven't any ideals that would get any action out of you. You might tear down a house, but you'd never build one. No two of

you could agree on a plan. Every one of you is too conceited about himself. If you had the guts to upset the Government to-morrow you'd be fighting among yourselves before night, and you'd have a chief or a king over you the next day, just as surely as they got one in Russia. It'll take them a hundred years over there to get back to as good a government as we have right now.

"You folks haven't any ideals except to show yourselves off. That's my private opinion. The way you used to tell me I didn't have any form in golf. You people are all gesture; you can get up on a platform and take perfect practice swings at a government, but you can't hit the ball. You used to take bully practice swings at golf, but you couldn't hit the ball because you didn't have any ideal. You were a good shadow golfer, like a shadow boxer that can hit dandy blows when he's hitting at nothing. Shadow stuff, shadow ideals, shadow thinkers—that's what you people are—spoiled children pretending you're deep thinkers."

Merle turned wearily to a sheaf of papers at his hand.

"You'll see one day," he said, quietly, "and it won't be a far day. Nothing now, not even the brute force of your type, can retard the sweep of the revolution. The wave is shaping, the crest is formed. Six months from now—a year at most——"

He gestured with a hand ominously.

Wilbur briefly considered this prophecy.

"Oh, I know things look exciting here, but why wouldn't they after the turnover they've had? And I know there's grafting and profiteering and high prices and rotten spots in the Government, but why not? That's another trouble with you people: you seem to think that some form of government will be perfect. You seem to expect a perfect government from imperfect human beings."

"Ah," broke in Merle, "I recognize that! That's some of the dear old Dave Cowan talk."

"Well, don't turn it down just on that account. Sometimes he isn't so crazy. He sees through you people. He

knows you would take all you could get in this world just as quick as the rest of us. He knows that much."

Merle waved it aside.

"Six months from now—a year at the most! A thrill of freedom has run through the people!"

Wilbur had relaxed in his chair. He spoke more lightly, scanning the face of his brother with veiled curiosity.

"By the way, speaking of revolutions, there's been kind of a one at Newbern; kind of a family revolution. A little one, but plenty of kick in it. They want you to come back and be a good boy. That's really what I came down here to say for them. Will you come back with me?"

Merle drew himself up—injured.

"Go back! Back to what? When my work is here, my heart, my life? I've let you talk because you're my brother. And you're so naïvely honest in your talk about our wonderful country and its idealism and the contemptible defects of a few of us who have the long vision! But I've let you talk, and now I must tell you that I am with this cause to the end. I can't expect your sympathy, or the sympathy of my people back there, but I must go my own way without it, fight my own battle——"

He was interrupted in a tone he did not like.

"Sympathy from the folks back there? Say, what do you mean—sympathy? Did I tell you what this revolution back there was all about? Did I tell you they've shut down on you?"

"You didn't! I still don't get your meaning."

"You cast them off, didn't you?"

"Oh!" A white hand deprecated this. "That's Sharon Whipple talk—his famous brand of horse humour. Surely, you won't say he's too subtle!"

"Well, anyway, you said you couldn't accept anything more from them when you left; you were going to work with your hands, and so forth. You weren't going to take any more of their tainted money."

"I've no doubt dear old Sharon would put it as delicately as that."

"Well, did you work with your hands? Have you had to be a toiler?"

"Oh, naturally I had resources! But might I ask"—Merle said it with chill dignity—"may I inquire just what relation this might have——"

"You won't have resources any longer."

"Eh?" Merle this time did not wave. He stared stonily at his informant.

"That was the revolution. They called each other down and found that every last one of them had been sending you money, each thinking he was the only one and no one wanting you to starve. Even your dear old Sharon Whipple kicked in every month. No wonder I didn't find you in a tenement."

"Preposterous!" expostulated Merle.

"Wasn't it? Anyway, they all got mad at each other, and then they all got mad at you; then they swore an oath or something." He paused impressively. "No more checks!"

"Preposterous!" Merle again murmured.

"But kind of plausible, wasn't it? Sharon wasn't any madder than the others when they found each other out. Mrs. Harvey D. is the only one they think they can't trust now. They're going to watch that woman's funds. Say, anything she gets through the lines to you—won't keep you from toiling!"

"Poor Mother Ella!" murmured Merle, his gaze remotely upon the woman. "She has always been so fond of me."

"They're all fond of you, for that matter, I think they're fonder of you than if you'd been born there. But still they're rank Bolsheviks right now. They confiscated your estates."

"I didn't need you to tell me they're fond of me," retorted Merle with recovered spirit. He sighed. "They must have missed me horribly this last year." There was contrition in his tone. "I suppose I should have taken time to think of that, but you'll never know how my work here has engrossed

me. I suppose one always does sacrifice to ideals. Still, I owed them something—I should have remembered that." He closed on a note of regret.

"Well, you better go back with me. They'll be mighty glad to see you."

"We can make that eleven-forty-eight if we hurry," he said. "I'll have to change a few things."

He bustled cheerily into a bedroom. As he moved about there he whistled the "Marseillaise."

Ten minutes later he emerged with bag, hat, and stick. The last item of corduroy had vanished from his apparel. He was quietly dressed, as an exploiter of the masses or a mechanic. He set the bag on the desk, and going to a window peered from behind the curtain into the street.

"Some of those rowdies are still prowling about," he said, "but there are cabs directly across the street."

He pulled the soft hat well down over his brow.

Wilbur had sat motionless in his chair while the dressing went on. He got up now.

"Listen!" he said. "If you hear back home of my telling people you're a dangerous radical, don't be worried. Even the Cowans have some family pride. And don't worry about the prowling rowdies out there. I'll get you across the street to a cab. Give me the bag."

As they crossed the street, Merle—at his brother's elbow—somewhat jauntily whistled, with fair accuracy, not the "Marseillaise," but an innocent popular ballad. Nor did he step aside for a torn strip of red cloth lying in their way.

CHAPTER XXI

THE next morning Wilbur found the Penniman household in turmoil. The spirit of an outraged Judge Penniman pervaded it darkly, and his wife wept as she flurried noisily about the kitchen. Neither of them would regard him until he enforced their notice. The judge, indignantly fanning himself in the wicker porch chair, put him off with vague black mutters about Winona. The girl had gone from bad to worse. But his skirts were clean. The mother was the one to blame. He'd talked all he could.

Then Wilbur, in the disordered kitchen, put himself squarely in the way of the teary mother. He commanded details. The distraught woman, hair tumbling from beneath a cap set rakishly to one side, vigorously stirred yellow dough in an earthen mixing dish.

"Stop this nonsense!" he gruffly ordered.

Mrs. Penniman abandoned the long spoon and made a pitiful effort to dry her eyes with an insufficient apron.

"Winona!" she sobbed. "Telegram—coming home tomorrow—nothing cooked up—trying to make chocolate cake——"

"Why take it so hard? You knew the blow had to fall some time."

Mrs. Penniman broke down again.

"It's not a joke!" she sobbed. Then with terrific effort—"Mar—married!"

"Winona Penniman married?"

The stricken mother opened swimming eyes at him, nodding hopelessly.

"Why, the little son of a gun!" said Wilbur, admiringly. "I didn't think she'd be so reckless!"

"I'm so glad!" whimpered the mother.

She seized the spoon and the bowl. Judge Penniman hovered at the open door of the kitchen.

"I told her what would happen!" he stormed. "She'll listen to me next time! Always the way in this house!"

Mrs. Penniman relapsed.

"We don't know the party. Don't know him from Adam. She don't even sign her right name."

Wilbur left the house of mourning and went out to the barn, where all that day he worked at the Can, fretting it at last into a decent activity.

Dave Cowan that night became gay and tasteless on hearing the news. He did what he could to fan the judge's resentment. He said it was probably, knowing Winona's ways, that she had wed a dissolute French nobleman, impoverished of all but his title. He hoped for the best, but he had always known that the girl was a light-minded baggage. He wondered how she could ever justify her course to Matthew Arnold if the need rose. He said the old house would now be turned into a saloon, or salong, as the French call it. He wished to be told if the right to be addressed as Madame la Marquise could compensate the child for those things of simple but enduring worth she had cast aside. He somewhat cheered Mrs. Penniman, but left the judge puffing with scorn.

Wilbur Cowan met the noon train next day. The Can rattled far too much for its size, but it went. Then from the train issued Winona, bedecked in alien gauds and furbelows, her keen little face radiant under a Paris trifle of brown velvet, her small feet active—under a skirt whose scant length would once have appalled her—in brown suede pumps and stockings notoriously of silken texture. Her quick eyes darting along the platform to where Wilbur stood, she rushed to embrace him.

"Where's the other one?" he demanded.

Astoundingly she tripped back to the still emptying car

and led forward none other than Edward—Spike—Brennon. He was in the uniform of a private and his eyes were hidden by dark glasses. Wilbur fell upon him. Spike's left arm went up expertly to guard his face from the rush, but came down when he recognized his assailant. Wilbur turned again to Winona.

"But where's he?" he asked. "Where's the main squeeze?"

Winona looked proudly at Spike Brennon.

"I'm him," said Spike.

"He's him," said Winona, and laid an arm protectingly across his shoulder.

"You wild little son of a gun!" He stared incredulously at the bride, then kissed her. "You should say 'he's he,' not 'he's him,'" he told her.

"Lay off that stuff!" ordered Winona.

"You come on home to trouble," directed Wilbur. He guided Spike to the car.

"It's like one of these dreams," said Spike above the rattle of the Can. "How a pretty thing like her could look twice at me!"

Winona held up a gloved hand to engage the driver's eye. Then she winked.

"Say," said Spike, "this is some car! When I get into one now'days I like to hear it go. I been in some lately you could hardly tell you moved."

The front of the house was vacant when the Can laboured to the gate, though the curtain of a second-floor front might have been seen to move. Winona led her husband up the gravelled walk.

"It's lovely," she told him, "this home of mine and yours. Here you go between borders all in bloom, phlox and peonies, and there are pansies and some early dahlias, and there's a yellow rosebush out."

"It smells beautiful," said Spike. He sniffed the air on each side.

"Sit here," said Winona, nor in the flush of the moment was she conscious of the enormity of what she did. She

put Spike into a chair that had for a score of years been sacred to the person of her invalid father. Then she turned to greet her mother. Mrs. Penniman, arrayed in fancy dress-making, was still damp-eyed but joyous.

"Your son, mother," said Winona. "Don't try to get up, Spike."

Mrs. Penniman bent over to kiss him. Spike's left went up accurately.

"He's so nervous," explained Winona, "ever since that French general sneaked up and kissed him on both cheeks when he pinned that medal on him."

"Mercy!" exclaimed Mrs. Penniman.

"For distinguished service beyond the line of duty," added the young wife, casually.

"I was so happy when I got your wire," sputtered her mother. "Of course, I was flustered just at first—so sudden and all."

"In the Army we do things suddenly," said Winona.

Heavy steps sounded within, and the judge paused at the open door. He was arrayed as for the Sabbath, a portentous figure in frock coat and gray trousers. A heavy scent of moth balls had preceded him.

"What's that new one I get?" asked Spike, sniffing curiously.

Winona pecked at her father's marbled cheeks, then led him to the chair.

"Father, this is my husband."

"How do you do, sir?" began the judge, heavily.

Spike's left forearm shielded his face, while his right hand went to meet the judge's.

"It's all right, Spike. No one else is going to kiss you."

"Spike?" queried the judge, uncertainly.

"It's a sort of nickname for him," explained Winona.

She drew her mother through the doorway and they became murmurous in the parlour beyond.

"This here is a peach of a chair," said Spike.

The judge started painfully. Until this moment he had not detected the outrage.

"Wouldn't you prefer this nice hammock?" he politely urged.

"No, thanks," replied Spike, firmly. "This chair kind of fits my frame."

Wilbur Cowan, standing farther along the porch, winked at Spike before he remembered.

"Say, ain't you French?" demanded the judge with a sudden qualm.

He had taken no stock in that fool talk of Dave Cowan's about a French nobleman; still, you never could tell. He had thought it as well to be dressed for it should he be required to meet even impoverished nobility.

"Hell, no!" said Spike. "Irish!" He moved uneasily in the chair. "Excuse me," he added.

"Oh!" said the judge, regretting the superior comfort of his linen suit. He eyed the chair with covetous glance. "Well, I hope everything's all for the best," he said, doubtfully.

"How beautiful it smells!" said Spike, sniffing away from the moth balls toward the rosebush. "Everything's beautiful, and this peach of a chair and all. What gets me—how a beautiful girl like she is could ever take a second look at me."

The judge regarded him sharply, with a new attention to the hidden eyes.

"Say, are you blind?" he asked.

"Blind as a bat! Can't see my hand before my face."

The horrified judge stalked to the door.

"You hear that?" he called in, but only the parrot heeded him.

"Flapdoodle, Flapdoodle, Flapdoodle!" it screeched.

Winona and her mother came to the door. They had been absent for a brief cry.

"What she could ever see in me," Spike was repeating—"a pretty girl like that!"

"Pretty girl, pretty girl, pretty girl! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!" screamed the parrot.

Its concluding laugh was evil with irony. Winona sped to the cage, regarding her old pet with dismay. She glanced back at Spike.

"Smart birdie, all right, all right," called Spike. "He knows her."

"Pretty girl, pretty girl!" Again came the derisive guffaw.

Never had Polly's sarcasm been so biting. Winona turned a murderous glance from it and looked uneasily back at her man.

"Dinner's on," called Mrs. Penniman.

"I'm having one of my bad days," groaned the judge. "Don't feel as if I could eat a mouthful."

But he was merely insuring that he could be the first to leave the table plausibly. He intended that the apparent misunderstanding about the wicker chair should have been but a thing of the moment, quickly past and forgotten.

"Why, what's the trouble with you, Father?" asked Winona in the tone of one actually seeking information.

The judge shot her a hurt look. It was no way to address an invalid of his standing.

"Chow, Spike," said Wilbur, and would have guided him, but Winona was lightly before him.

Dave Cowan followed them from the little house.

"Present me to His Highness," said he, after kneeling to kiss the hand of Winona.

The mid-afternoon hours beheld Spike Brennon again strangely occupying the wicker porch chair. He even wielded the judge's very own palm-leaf fan as he sat silent, sniffing at intervals toward the yellow rose. Once he was seen to be moving his hand, with outspread fingers, before his face.

Winona had manœuvred her father from the chair, nor had she the grace to veil her subterfuge after she lured him to the back of the house. She merely again had wished to know what, in plain terms, his ailment was; what, for that

matter, had been the trouble with him for twenty years. The judge fell speechless with dismay.

"You eat well and you sleep well, and you're well nourished," went on the daughter, remorseless all at once.

"Little you know," began the judge at last.

"But I shall know, Father. Remember, I've learned things. I'm going to take you in hand. I may even have to be severe with you but all for your own good."

She spoke with icy conviction. There was a new, cold gleam in her prying eyes. The judge suffered genuinely.

"I should think you had learned things!" he protested, miserably. "For one thing, miss, that skirt ain't a respectable garment."

Winona slid one foot toward him.

"Pooh! Don't be silly!" Never before had Winona poohed her father.

"Cigarette fiend, too," accused the judge.

"My husband got me to stop."

"Strong drink," added the judge.

"Pooh!" again breathed Winona. "A little nip of something when you're done up."

"You talking that way!" admonished the twice-poohed parent. "You that was always so——"

"I'm not it any longer." She did a dance step toward the front door, but called back to him: "Spike's set his heart on that chair. You'll have to find something else for yourself."

"'Twon't always be so," retorted the judge, stung beyond reason at the careless finality of her last words. "You wait—wait till the revolution sweeps you high and mighty people out of your places! Wait till the workers take over their rights—you wait!"

But Winona had not waited. She had gone to confer on Wilbur Cowan a few precious drops of that which had caused her father to put upon her the stigma of alcoholic intemperance.

"It's real genuine dandelion wine," she told him. "One

of the nurses got it for me when we left the boat in Boston. Her own mother made it, and she gave me the recipe, and it isn't a bit of trouble. I'm going after dandelions tomorrow, Spike and I. Of course we'll have to be secret about it."

In the sacred precincts of the Penniman parlour Wilbur Cowan raised the wineglass to his lips and tasted doubtingly. After a second considering sip he announced—"They can't arrest you for that."

Winona looked a little relieved, but more than a little disappointed.

"I thought it had a kick," she mourned.

"Here's to you and him, anyway! Didn't I always tell you he was one good little man?"

"He's all of that," said Winona, and tossed off her own glass of what she sincerely hoped was not a permitted beverage.

"You've come on," said Wilbur.

"I haven't started," said Winona.

Later that afternoon Winona sat in her own room in close consultation with Juliana Whipple. Miss Whipple, driving her own car as no other Whipple could have driven it, had hastened to felicitate the bride. Tall, gaunt, a little stooped now, her weathered face aglow, she had ascended the steps to greet the couple. Spike's tenancy of the chair had been made doubly secure by Winona on the step at his feet.

Juliana embraced Winona and took one of Spike's knotted hands to press warmly between both her own. Then Winona had dragged her to privacy, and their talk had now come to a point.

"It's that—that parrot!" exploded Winona, desperately. "I never used to notice, but you know—that senseless gabble, 'pretty girl, pretty girl,' and then the thing laughs like a fiend. It would be all right if he wouldn't laugh. You might think he meant it. And poor Spike is so sensi-

tive; he gets things you wouldn't think he'd get. That awful bird might set him to thinking. Now he believes I'm pretty. In spite of everything I've said to him, he believes it. Well, I'm not going to have that bird putting any other notion into his mind, not if I have to——"

She broke off, but murder was in her tone.

"I see," said Miss Whipple. "You're right, of course—only you are pretty, Winona. I never used to think—think about it, I mean, but you've changed. You needn't be afraid of any parrot."

Winona patted the hand of Miss Whipple, an able hand suggesting that of Spike in its texture and solidity.

"That's ever so nice of you, but I know all about myself. Spike's eyes are gone, but that bird is going, too."

"Why not let me take the poor old thing?" said Juliana. "It can say 'pretty girl' to me and laugh its head off if it wants." She hung a moment on this, searching Winona's face with clear eyes. "I have no blind husband," she finished.

"You're a dear," said Winona.

"I'm so glad for you," said Juliana.

"I must guard him in so many ways," confided Winona. "He's happy now—he's forgotten for the moment. But sometimes it comes back on him terribly—what he is, you know. I've seen him over there lose control—want to kill himself. He says he can't help such times. It will seem to him that someone has shut him in a dark room and he must break down its walls—break out into the light. He would try to break the walls down—like a caged beast. It wasn't pretty. And I'm his eyes and all his life, and no old bird is ever going to set him thinking I'm not perfectly beautiful. That's the plain truth. I may lie about it myself to him pretty soon. I might as well. He only thinks I'm being flirty when I deny it. Oh, I know I've changed! Sometimes it seems to me now as if I used to be—well, almost prudish."

"My dear, he knows better than you do, much better,

how beautiful you are. But you're right about the bird. I'll take him gladly." She reflected a moment. "There's a fine place for the cage in my room—on my hope chest."

"You dear!" said Winona. "Of course I couldn't have killed it."

Downstairs ten minutes later Winona, the light of filial devotion in her eyes, was explaining to her father that she was giving the parrot away because she had noticed that it annoyed him.

The judge beamed gratitude.

"Why, it's right thoughtful of you, Winona. It does annoy me, kind of. That miserable Dave Cowan's taught it some new rigmarole—no meaning to it, but bothersome when you want to be quiet."

Even in the days of her white innocence Winona Penniman had not been above doing a thing for one reason while advancing another less personal. She had always been a strange girl.

Juliana took leave of Spike.

"You have a lovely wife," she told him. "It isn't going to be too hard for you, this life."

"Watch us!" said Winona. "I'll make his life more beautiful than I am." Her hand fluttered to his shoulder.

"Oh, me? I'll be all right," said Spike.

"And thank you for this wonderful bird," said Juliana.

She lifted the cage from its table and went slowly toward the gate. The parrot divined that dirty work was afoot, but it had led a peaceful life and its repertoire comprised no call of alarm.

"Pretty girl, pretty girl, pretty girl!" it shrieked. Then followed its harshest laugh of scorn.

Juliana did not quicken her pace to the car; she finished the little journey in all dignity, and placed her burden in the tonneau.

"Pretty girl, pretty girl!" screamed the dismayed bird. The laugh was long and eloquent of derision.

Dave Cowan reached the Penniman gate, pausing a mo-

ment to watch the car leave. Juliana shot him one swift glance while the parrot laughed.

"Who was that live-looking old girl?" he demanded as he came up the steps. "Oh!" he said when Winona told him.

He glanced sympathetically after the car. A block away it had slowed to turn a corner. The parrot's ironic laughter came back to them.

"Yes, I remember her," said Dave, musingly. He was glad to recall that he had once shown the woman a little attention.

CHAPTER XXII

OF ALL humans cumbering the earth Dave Cowan thought farmers the most pitiable. To this tireless-winged bird of passage farming was not a loose trade, and the news that his son was pledged to agrarian pursuits shocked him. To be mewed up for life on a few acres of land!

"It was the land tricked us first," admonished Dave. "There we were, footloose and free, and some fool went and planted a patch of ground. Then he stayed like a fool to see what would happen. Pretty soon he fenced the patch to keep out prehistoric animals. First thing he knew he was fond of it. Of course he had to stay there—he couldn't take if off with him. That's how man was tricked. Most he could ever hope after that was to be a small-towner. You may think you can own land and still be free, but you can't. Before you know it you have that home feeling. Never owned a foot of it! That's all that saved me."

Dave frowned at his son hopefully, as one saved might regard one who still might be.

"I'm not owning any land," suggested his son.

"No; but it's tricky stuff. You get round it, working at it, nursing it—pretty soon you'll want to own some, then you're dished. It's the first step that counts. After that you may crave to get out and see places, but you can't; you have to plant the hay and the corn. You to fool round those Whipple farms—I don't care if it is a big job with big money—it's playing with fire. Pretty soon you'll be as tight-fixed to a patch of soil as any yap that ever blew out the gas in a city hotel. You'll stick there and raise hogs *en masse* for free people that can take a trip when they happen to feel like it." Dave had but lately learned *en masse*

and was glad to find a use for it. He spoke with the untroubled detachment of one saved, who could return at will to the glad life of nomady. "You, with the good loose trades you know! Do you want to take root in this hole like a willow branch that someone shoves into the ground? Don't you ever want to move—on and on and on?"

His son at the time had denied stoutly that he felt this urge. Now, after a week of his new work, he would have been less positive. It was a Sunday afternoon, and he sprawled face down on the farther shaded slope of West Hill, confessing a lively fear that he might take root like the willow. Late in that first week the old cry had begun to ring in his ears—Where do we go from here?—bringing the cold perception that he would not go anywhere from here.

Through all his early years in Newbern he had not once felt the wander-bidding; never, as Dave Cowan put it, had he been itchy-footed for the road. Then, with the war, he had crept up to look over the top of the world, and now, unaccountably, in the midst of work he had looked forward to with real pleasure, his whole body was tingling for new horizons.

It seemed to be so with a dozen of the boys he had come back with. Some of these were writing to him, wanting him to come here, to come there; to go on and on with them to inviting places they knew—and on again from there! Mining in South America, lumbering in the Northwest, ranching in the Southwest; one of his mates would be a sailor, and one would be with a circus. Something within him beyond reason goaded him to be up and off. He felt his hold slipping; his mind floated in an ecstasy of relaxation.

His first days at the Home Farm had been good-enough days. Sharon Whipple had told him a modern farmer must first be a mechanic, and he was already that—and no one had shot at him. But the novelty of approaching good machine-gun cover without apprehension had worn off.

"Ain't getting cold feet, are you?" asked Sharon one day,

observing him hang idly above an abused tractor with the far-off look in his eyes.

"Nothing like that," he had protested almost too warmly. "No, sir; I'll slog on right here."

Now for the first time in all their years of association he saw an immense gulf between himself and Sharon Whipple. Sharon was an old man, turning to look back as he went down a narrow way into a hidden valley. But he—Wilbur Cowan—was climbing a long slope into new light. How could they touch? How could this old man hold him to become another old man on the same soil—when he could be up and off, a happy world romper like his father before him?

"Funny, funny, funny!" he said aloud, and lazily rolled over to stare into blue space.

Probably it was quite as funny out there. The people like himself on those other worlds would be the sport of confusing impulses, in the long run obeying some deeper instinct whose source was in the parent star dust, wandering or taking root in their own strange soils. But why not wander when the object of it all was so obscure, so apparently trivial? Enough others would submit to rule from the hidden source, take root like the willow—mate! That was another chain upon them. Women held them back from wandering. That was how they were tricked into the deadly home feeling his father warned him of.

"Funny, funny, funny!" he said again.

From an inner pocket he drew a sheet of note paper worn almost through at the fold, stained with the ooze of trenches and his own sweat. It had come deviously to him in the front line a month after his meeting with Patricia Whipple. In that time the strange verse had still run in his mind—a crown of stars, and under her feet the moon! The tumult of fighting had seemed to fix it there. He had rested on the memory of her and become fearless of death. But the time had changed so tremendously. He could hardly recall the verse, hardly recall that he had faced death or the strange girl.

"Wilbur, dear," he read, "I am still holding you. Are you me? What do you guess? Do you guess we were a couple of homesick ninnies, tired and weak and too combustible? Or do you guess it meant something about us finding each other out all in one second, like a flash of something? Do you guess we were frazzled up to the limit and not braced to hold back or anything, the way civilized people do? I mean, will we be the same back home? If we will be, how funny! We shall have to find out, shan't we? But let's be sporty, and give the thing a chance to be true if it can. That's fair enough, isn't it? What I mean, let's not shatter its morale by some poky chance meeting with a lot of people round, whom it is none of their business what you and I do or don't do. That would be fierce, would it not? So much might depend.

"Anyway, here's what: The first night I am home—your intelligence department must find out the day, because I'm not going to write to you again if I never see you, I feel so unmaidenly—I shall be at our stile leading out to West Hill. You remember it—above the place where those splendid gypsies camped when we were such a funny little boy and girl. The first night as soon as I can sneak out from my proud family. You come there. We'll know!"

"Funny, funny, funny—the whole game!" he said.

He lost himself in a lazy wonder if it could be true. He didn't know. Once she had persisted terribly in his eyes; now she had faded. Her figure before the broken church was blurred.

Sharon Whipple found him the next afternoon teaching two new men the use and abuse of a tractor, and plainly bored by his task. Sharon seized the moment to talk pungently about the good old times when a farm hand didn't have to know how to disable a tractor, or anything much, and would work fourteen hours a day for thirty dollars a month and his keep. He named the wage of the two pupils in a tone of disgruntled awe that piqued them pleasantly but did not otherwise im-

press. When they had gone their expensive ways he turned to Wilbur.

"Did you get over to that dry-fork place to-day?"

"No; too busy here with these highbinders."

He spoke wearily, above a ripening suspicion that he would not much longer be annoyed in this manner. A new letter had that morning come from the intending adventurer into South America.

"I'll bet you've had a time with this new help," said Sharon.

"I've put three men at work over on that clearing, though."

"I'll get over there myself with you to-morrow; no, not to-morrow—next day after. That girl of ours gets in to-morrow noon. Have to be there, of course."

"Of course."

"She trotted a smart mile over there. Everybody says so. Family tickled to death about her. Me, too, of course."

"Of course."

"Rattlepate, though."

"Yes, sir," said Wilbur.

When the old man had gone he looked out over the yellowing fields with a frank distaste for the level immensity. Suddenly there rang in his ears the harsh singing of many men: "Where do we go from here, boys, where do we go from here?" Old Sharon was rooted in the soil; dying there. But he was still free. He could wire Leach Belding he was starting—and start.

About eight o'clock the following night he parked the Can beside the ridge road, and for the first time in his proud career of ownership cursed its infirmities. It was competent, but no car for a tryst one might not wish to advertise. When its clamour had been stilled he waited some moments, feeling that a startled countryside must rush to the spot. Yet no one came, so at last he went furtively through the thinned grove and about clumps of hazel brush, feeling his way, stepping

softly, crouching low, until he could make out the stile where it broke the lines of the fence. The night was clear and the stile was cleanly outlined by starlight. Beyond the fence was a shadowed mass, first a clump of trees, the outbuildings of the Whipple New Place, the house itself. There were lights at the back, and once voices came to him, then the thin shatter of glass on stone, followed by laughs from two dissonant throats. He stood under a tall pine, listening, but no other sound came. After a while he sat at the foot of the tree. Crickets chirped and a bat circled through the night. The scent of the pine from its day-long baking was sharp in his nostrils. His back tired against the tree, and he eased himself to the cooled grass, face down, his hands crossed under his chin. He could look up now and see the stile against stars.

He waited. He had expected to wait. The little night sounds that composed the night's silence, his own stillness, his intent watching, put him back to nights when silence was ominous. Once he found he had stopped breathing to listen to the breathing of the men on each side of him. He was waiting for the word, and felt for a rifle. He had to rise to shake off this oppression. On his feet he laughed softly, being again in Newbern on a fool's mission. He lay dow,n hands under his chin, but again the silent watching beset him with the old oppression. He must be still and strain his eyes ahead. Presently the word would come, or he would feel the touch of a groping foe. He half dozed at last from the memory of that other endless fatigue. He came to himself with a start and raised his head to scan the stile. The darkness had thickened but the two posts at the ends of the fence were still outlined. He watched and waited.

After a long time the east began to lighten; a deepening glow rimmed West Hill, picking out in silver the trees along its edge. If she meant to come she must come soon, he thought, but the rising moon distinctly showed the bare stile. She had written a long time ago. She was notoriously a rattlepate. Of course she would have forgotten. Then

for a moment his straining eyes were puzzled. His gaze had not shifted even for an instant, yet the post at the left of the stile had unaccountably thickened. He considered it a trick of the advancing moonshine, and looked more intently. It was motionless, like the other post, yet it had thickened. Then he saw it was taller, but still it did not move. It could be no one. Mildly curious, he crept forward to make the post seem right in this confusing new glamour. But it broadened as he neared it, and still was taller than its neighbour, its lines not so sharp.

He rose to his feet, with a dry laugh at his own credulity, taking some slow steps forward, expecting each stride to resolve the post to its true dimensions. He was within a dozen feet of it before he saw it could not be a post—anyway, not the same post. His scalp crept into minute wrinkles at the back of his head. He knew the feeling—fear! But, as in other times, he could not make his feet go back. Two other steps and he saw she must be there. She had not stirred, but the rising light caught her wan face and a pale glint of eyes.

All at once his fear was greater—greater than any he had known in battle. His feet dragged protestingly, but he forced them on. He wanted her to speak or move to break that tension of fear. But not until he reached out stiffening fingers to touch her did she stir. Then she gave a little whispered cry and all at once it was no longer moonlight for him, but full day. A girl in nurse's cap and a faded, much laundered dress of light blue stood before a battered church, beside a timbered breach in its gray stone wall. He was holding her.

The song was coming to him, harsh and full throated from many men: "Where do we go from here, boys, where do we go from here?"

"We don't go anywhere from here," he heard himself say in anger. They were the only words he had spoken.

The girl was shaking as she had shaken back at that church; uttering little shapeless cries from a throat that by

turns fluttered and tightened. One clenched hand was fiercely thumping his shoulder. They were on strange land, as if they had the crust of the moon itself beneath their feet.

They seemed to know it had been true.

They were sitting on a log in shadow. He rose and stepped into the light, facing his watch to the moon, now gone so high it had paled from gold to silver. He went to her again.

"Do you know it's nearly one?"

"It must be that—I suppose so."

"Shouldn't you be going?"

She leaned forward, shoulders drooping, a huddled bit of black in the loose cloak she wore. He waited. At length she drew her shoulders up with a quick intake of breath. She held this a moment, her chin lifted.

"There, now I've decided," she said.

"What?"

"I'm not going back."

"No?"

"Not going through any more fuss. I'm too tired. It seemed as if I'd never get here, never get out of that dreadful place, never get out of Paris, never get out of Brest, never get off the boat, never get home! I'm too tired for any more never gets. I'm not going to have talking and planning and arguments and tearful relatives forever and a day more. See if I do! I'm here, and I'm not going to break it again. I'm not going back!"

He reached down to pat her hand with a humouring air.

"Where will you go?"

"That's up to you."

"But what can I——"

"I'm going where you go. I tell you I'm too tired to have any talk."

He sat down beside her.

"Yes, you're a tired child," he told her.

She detected the humoring inflection.

"None of that! I'm tired, but I'm stubborn. I'm not

going back. I'm supposed to be sleeping soundly in my little bed. In the morning, before I'm supposed to be up, I'll issue a communique from—any old place; or tell 'em face to face. I won't mind that a little bit after everything's over. It's telling what's going to be and listening to talk about it that I won't have. I'm not up to it. Now you talk!"

"You're tired. Are you too tired to know your own mind?"

"No; just too tired to argue with it, fight it; and I'm free, white, and twenty-one; and I've read about the self-determination of small peoples."

"Say, aren't you afraid?"

"Don't be silly! Of course I'm afraid! What is that about perfect love casting out fear?—don't believe it! I'm scared to death—truly!"

"Go back till to-morrow."

"I won't! I've gone over all that."

"All right! Shove off!"

He led her to the ambushed Can, whose blemishes became all too apparent in the merciless light of the moon.

"What a lot of wound chevrons it has!" she exclaimed.

"Well, I didn't expect anything like this. I could have got——"

"It looks like a permanent casualty. Will it go?"

"It goes for me. You're sure you don't think it's better to——"

"On your way!" she gayly ordered, but her voice caught, and she clung to him a moment before entering the car. "No; I'm not weakening—don't you think it! But let me rest a second."

She was in the car, again wearily gay. The Can hideously broke the quiet.

"Home, James!" she commanded.

Dawn found the car at rest on the verge of a hill with a wide-sweeping view over and beyond the county seat of Newbern County. Patricia slept within the fold of his arm. At least half of the slow forty miles she had slept against his

shoulder in spite of the car's resounding progress over a country road. Once in the darkness she had wakened long enough to tell him not to go away.

The rising sun lighted the town of Halton below them, and sent level rays across a wide expanse of farmland beyond it, flat meadows and rolling upland. White mist shrouded the winding trail of a creek. It was the kind of landscape he had viewed yesterday with a rising distaste; land that had tricked people from their right to wander; to go places on a train when they would.

He brought his eyes back from the treacherous vista and turned them down to the face of the sleeping girl. A pale scarf was wound about her head, and he could see but little beyond it but the tip of her nose, a few scattered, minute freckles on one cheek. She was limp, one bare hand falling inertly over the edge of the seat between them. He looked out again at the checkerboard of farms. He, too, had been tricked.

"But what a fine trick!" he said aloud. "No wonder it works!"

He dozed himself presently, nodding till his forward-pitching head would waken him. Afterward he heard Spike saying:"So dark you can't see your hand before your face." He came awake. His head was on Patricia's shoulder, her arm supporting him.

"You must have gone to sleep and let the car stop," she told him. He stared sleepily, believing it. "But I want my breakfast," she reminded him. He sat up, winking the sleep from his eyes, shaking it from his head.

"Of course," he said.

He looked again out over the land to which an old device had inveigled him. A breeze had come with the dawn, stirring the grain fields into long ripples. At the roadside was the tossing silver of birch leaves.

"This is one whale of a day for us two, isn't it?" he demanded.

"You said it!" she told him.

"Breakfast and a license and——"

"You know it!" she declared.

"Still afraid?"

"More than ever! It's a wonder and a wild desire, but it scares me stiff—you're so strange."

"You know, it isn't too late."

She began to thump him with a clenched fist up between his shoulders.

"Carry on!" she ordered. "There isn't a slacker in the whole car!"

A few hours later, in the dining room of the Whipple New Place, Gideon, Harvey D., and Merle Whipple were breakfasting. To them entered Sharon Whipple from his earlier breakfast, ruddy, fresh-shaven, bubbling.

"On my way to the Home Farm," he explained, "but I had to drop in for a look at the girl by daylight. She seemed too peaked last night."

"Pat's still sleeping," said her father over his egg cup.

"That's good! I guess a rest was all she needed. Beats all, girls nowadays seem to be made of wire rope. You take that one——"

A telephone bell rang in the hall beyond, and Merle Whipple went to it.

"Hello, hello! Whipple New Place—Merle Whipple speaking." He listened, standing in the doorway to turn a puzzled face to the group about the table. "Hello! Who—who?" His bewilderment was apparent. "But it's Pat talking," he said, "over long distance."

"Calling from her room upstairs to fool you," warned Sharon. "Don't I know her flummididdles?"

But the look of bewilderment on Merle's face had become a look of pure fright. He raised a hand sternly to Sharon.

"Once more," he called, hoarsely, and again listened with widening eyes. He lifted his face to the group, the receiver still at his ear. "She says—good heaven! She says, 'I've gone A. W. O. L., and now I'm safe and married—I'm

married to Wilbur Cowan.'" He uttered his brother's name in the tone of a shocked true Whipple.

"Good heaven!" echoed Harvey D.

"I'm blest!" said Gideon.

"I snum to goodness!" said the dazed Sharon. "The darned skeesicks!"

Merle still listened. Again he raised a now potent hand.

"She says she doesn't know how she came to do it, except that he put a comether on her."

He hung up the receiver and fell into a chair before the table that held the telephone.

"Scissors and white aprons!" said Sharon. "Of all things you wouldn't expect!"

Merle stood before the group with a tragic face.

"It's hard, Father, but she says it's done. I suppose—I suppose we'll have to make the best of it."

Hereupon Sharon Whipple's eyes began to blink rapidly, his jaw dropped, and he slid forward in his chair to writhe in a spasm of what might be weirdly silent laughter. His face was purple, convulsed, but no sound came from his moving lips. The others regarded him with alarm.

"Not a stroke?" cried Harvey D., and ran to his side. As he sought to loosen Sharon's collar the old man waved him off and became happily vocal.

"Oh, oh!" he gasped. "That Merle boy has brightened my whole day!"

Merle frowned.

"Perhaps you may see something to laugh at," he said, icily.

Sharon controlled his seizure. Pointing his eyebrows severely, he cocked a presumably loaded thumb at Merle.

"Let me tell you, young man, the best this family can make of that marriage will be a darned good best. Could you think of a better best—say, now?" Merle turned impatiently from the mocker.

"Blest if I can—on the spur of the moment!" said Gideon.

Harvey D. looked almost sharply at the exigent Merle.

"Pat's twenty-five and knows her own mind better than we do," he said.

"I never knew it at all!" said Gideon.

"It's almost a distinct relief," resumed Harvey D. "As I think of it I like it." He went to straighten the painting of an opened watermelon beside a copper kettle, that hung above the sideboard. "He's a fine young chap." He looked again at Merle, fixing knife and fork in a juster alignment on his plate. "I dare say we needed him in the family."

Late the following afternoon Sharon triumphantly brought his car to a stop before the gateway leading up to the red farmhouse. The front door proving unresponsive, he puffed about to the rear. He found a perturbed Patricia Cowan, in cap and apron, tidying the big kitchen. Her he greeted rapturously.

"This kitchen——" began the new mistress.

"So he put a comether on you!"

"Absolutely—when I wasn't looking!"

"Put one on me, too," said Sharon; "years ago."

"This kitchen," began Patricia again, "is an unsanitary outrage. It needs a thousand things done to it. We'd never have put up with this in the Army. That sink there"—she pointed it out—"must have something of a carbolic nature straight off."

"I know, I know!" Sharon was placating. "I'm going to put everything right for you."

"New paint for all the woodwork—white."

"Sure thing—as white as you want it."

"And blue velours curtains for the big room. I always dreamed I'd have a house with blue velours curtains."

"Sure, sure! Anything you want you order."

"And that fireplace in the big room—I burned some trash there this morning, and it simply won't inhale."

"Never did," said Sharon. "We'll run the chimney up higher. Anything else?"

"Oh, lots! I've a long list somewhere."

"I bet you have! But it's a good old house; don't build 'em like this any more; not a nail in it; sound as a nut. Say, miss, did you know there was high old times in this house about seventy-three years ago? Fact! They thought I wasn't going to pull through. I was over two days old before it looked like I'd come round. Say, I learned to walk out in that side yard. That reminds me—" Sharon hesitated in mild embarrassment—"there's a place between them two wings—make a bully place for a sun room; spoil the architecture, mebbe, but who cares? Sun room—big place to play round in—play room, or anything like that."

Patricia had been searching among a stack of newspapers, but she had caught "sun room."

"Stunning!" she said. "We need another big place right now, or when my things get here."

Sharon coughed.

"Need it more later, I guess."

But Patricia had found her paper.

"Oh, here's something I put aside to ask you about! I want you to understand I'm going to be all the help I can here. This advertisement says 'Raise Belgian hares,' because meat is so high. Do you know—do people really make millions at it, and could I do the work?"

Sharon was shaking his head.

"You could if you didn't have something else to do. And I suppose they sell for money, though I never did hear tell of a Belgian-hare millionaire. Heard of all other kinds, but not him. But you look here, young woman, I hope there'll be other things not sold by the pound that'll keep you from rabbit raising. This family's depending a lot on you. Didn't you hear my speech about that fine sun room?"

"Will you please not bother me at a time like this?" scolded Patricia. "Now out with you—he's outside somewhere! And can't you ever in the world for five minutes get mere Whipples out of your mind?" She actively waved him on from the open door.

Sharon passed through a grape arbour, turning beyond it to

study the site of the sun room. All in a moment he built and peopled it. How he hoped they would be coming along to play in there; at least three before he was too old to play with them. He saw them now; saw them, moreover, upon the flimsiest of promises, all superbly gifted with the Whipple nose. Then he went hopefully off toward the stables. He came upon Wilbur Cowan inspecting a new reaper under one of the sheds. This time the old man feigned no pounding of the boy's back—made no pretense that he did not hug him.

"I'm so glad, so glad, so almighty glad!" he said as they stood apart.

He did not speak with his wonted exuberance, saying the words very quietly. But Sharon had not to be noisy to sound sincere.

"Thanks," said Wilbur. "Of course I couldn't be sure how her people would——"

"Stuff!" said Sharon. "All tickled to death but one near-Whipple and he's only annoyed. But you've been my boy—in my fool mind I always had you for my boy, when you was little and when you went to war. You could of known that, and that was enough for you to know. Of course I never did think of you and Pat. That was too gosh-all perfect. Of course I called her a rattlepate, but she was my girl as much as you was my boy."

The old eyes shone mistily upon Wilbur, then roved to the site of his dream before he continued.

"Me? I'm getting on—and on. Right fast, too. But you—you and that fine girl—why, you two are a new morning in a new world, so fresh and young and proud of each other, the way you are!" He hesitated, his eyes coming back. "Only thing I hope for now—before I get bedfast or something—say, take a look at the space between them south wings—stand over this way a mite." Sharon now built there, with the warmest implications, a perfect sun room. "That'll be one grand place," he affirmed of his work when all was done.

"Yes, it sounds good," replied Wilbur.

"Oh, a grand place, big as outdoors, getting any sun there is—great for winter, great for rainy days!" Wistfully he searched the other's face. "You know, Buck, a grand place to—play in, or anything like that."

"Yes, sir," said Wilbur.

THE END

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